REPRESENTATIVE CONTINENTAL DRAMAS

REVOLUTIONARY AND TRANSITIONAL

Edited by Montrose J. Moses

822.08
M85t

LIBRARY
OF
ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE,
ANNANDALE, N. Y.

WITHDRAWN

REPRESENTATIVE CONTINENTAL DRAMAS

REVOLUTIONARY AND TRANSITIONAL

By Montrose J. Moses

REPRESENTATIVE BRITISH DRAMAS
REPRESENTATIVE CONTINENTAL DRAMAS
REPRESENTATIVE AMERICAN DRAMAS
REPRESENTATIVE CONTINENTAL ONE-ACT PLAYS
HENRIK IBSEN: THE MAN AND HIS PLAYS
A TREASURY OF PLAYS FOR CHILDREN
ANOTHER TREASURY OF PLAYS FOR CHILDREN
THE AMERICAN DRAMATIST
BRITISH PLAYS FROM THE RESTORATION TO 1820
THE FABULOUS FORREST
DRAMAS OF MODERNISM AND THEIR FORERUNNERS

REPRESENTATIVE CONTINENTAL DRAMAS

REVOLUTIONARY AND TRANSITIONAL

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTIONS

BY

MONTROSE J. MOSES

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1932

Main PN 6112 .M58 Representative continental dramas (822.08 M85r)

Copyright, 1924,

By Little, Brown, and Company.

All rights reserved

BARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 12504

Printed in the United States of America

TO

WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

AN APPRECIATIVE ADHERENT
OF THE MODERN DRAMA, AND
A FRIEND I VALUE

PREFACE

The laboratory method of analyzing plays may not be æsthetically satisfying. Yet there is no more graphic way of determining what is meant by the terms "transition" and "change", so continually used by the critics of the Modern Drama, than to hold up two pictures, compare two methods, show the angle of difference between two social and spiritual visions. Definitions epitomize; laws codify. But neither is a living realization, until the forces behind them are clearly argued out, and the human reasons for them justified.

What would be the mere expression of the Corn Laws of 1832, the significant little volume, dated 1833, of Tennyson's poetry, the publication of Wordsworth's Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, without those minute understandings of the life-stuff which called them forth? There are supreme moments when the current, in social, economic, spiritual, and artistic life, reaches a cumulative force which determines its direction. These are the moments made most of in history as defining progress. There are no sharp breaks — the stream of endeavor is continuous; its direction may be turned only by revolution. Otherwise its flux is marked by varying intensities; its definitions are like nodes on a violin string. Something causes the nodes — some urge of the creative spirit, some intention of the body politic, some revulsion against established tradition. And so literature, as well as life, must be forever revalued. Its greatness depends upon how constant it is at all times; how necessary it is at any given moment for the maintenance and enrichment of the human spirit, for the support of human ideals. That is the touchstone of all great art.

If there be truth in this view, we are always in transition, in a state of change. Time is eternal; the times are the human mileposts. And of the mileposts, the drama in all countries makes plentiful use. They are sometimes the same mileposts planted at different moments, though relatively in the same period. They are often lonely beacon flames that, like the muezzin's call for prayer, bid the brave artists follow. And so we have schools — groups uttering the same artistic creed — upholders of the naturalistic method, of realism, of symbolism, and now, of expressionism.

In such cases, the initiative usually comes to the theatre from the outside. It was the novel that helped to draw the drama away from contrivance; it was industrialism and science that opened up new classes to show concern for, new psychologies to be reckoned with: — from fustian to moral responsibility, from veneer to truth. If one would hope to understand rightly the modern forces affecting the drama, then the new ideas effecting the changes must be looked for first in those conditions shown in the novel. The significance of Darwin and Herbert Spencer, of the radical spirit which made progress with the rise of the labor classes, — the urge of Zola, the philosophy of Nietzsche, the apostolic fervor of Tol-

stoy — these are the matters that must be followed, in order that the import of the Modern Drama may be wholly sensed. In their paths came Ibsen and Strindberg and Henry Becque and Tchekhoff — to mention a few — and the most pioneer of them all were Ibsen and Becque.

The present collection of plays is chosen with one object in mind: to be representative of certain aspects of the "change" and "transition" so often referred to. In my "Representative British Dramas: Victorian and Modern", I dealt with one country breaking from romantic models — the drama of false illusions and of bombastic sentiment. It was a theatre of one nation reacting to the influence of foreign examples. The introductions written for the plays were both biographical and critical, and, when read together, presented a unity which pictured the British stage from 1850 to the present.

Such a method is hardly possible — and scarcely less advisable — in the instance of "Representative Continental Dramas: Revolutionary and Transitional." Here I am dealing with eight countries, any one of which would lend itself to profound historical and sociological survey: D'Annunzio would be more clearly understood if his patriotic emotions were analyzed and disentangled; Rostand is certainly a part of that French spirit which we call Gallic, so given to heroic panegyric in sonorous verse; Andreyev and Tchekhoff, in their correspondence and in their work, are minutely bound to Russia at a significant moment. It would be a task — for which space does not permit — to give eight thorough backgrounds before which moved the fifteen authors selected for this volume.

One has to be content with noting percussions, high lights of leadership, characteristic modifications of technique, which, strange to say, are intertwined in relationship — one country to another, one worker to another — and which enable one thus to give a single impression of Continental Drama — apart from national variations. For it is characteristic of "transition" in the theatre that it usually breaks in the same manner in every locality; that nations are imitative; that struggle resorts to the same means toward the same end — artistic freedom. What in England was called by Holbrook Jackson "The Eighteen Nineties", might, if the book had been written by a Continental, have been called, with justice, "The Eighteen Eighties", for it was in that decade that Ibsen wrote "Ghosts" (1881), "The Wild Duck" (1884), "Rosmersholm" (1886) and "The Lady from the Sea" (1888). It was also in that period that Henry Becque produced "Les Corbeaux", properly translated "The Vultures." An examination of bibliographical data in Mr. Barrett H. Clark's "The Continental Drama of To-day" will reveal further suggestive statistical data to establish the very pronounced curve of innovation dominant in European drama at this time. Tolstoy gave us "The Power of Darkness" in 1886, and "The Fruits of Culture" in 1889; Strindberg wrote "The Father" in 1887, and "Miss Julia" in 1888. Becque — not a prolific dramatist — had, in addition to "The Vultures", written "The Parisian Woman." While Maeterlinck was beginning with "The Princess Maleine."

What is equally as significant, and pregnant with power for change, was the establishment, in Paris, of the Théâtre Libre, in 1887, which fathered Jean Jullien, Henry Céard, Curel, Georges Ancey, Georges de Porte-Riche, Ephraim Mikhaël, and Eugène Brieux (to mention but a few); and the Freie Buehne, in Berlin, in 1889, founded by Paul Schlenther and Otto Brahm. Like Antoine, the latter showed their revolutionary intention by giving as repertory Ibsen and Björnson, Tolstoy and Strindberg. But, in addition, they became centres of incentive.

Hauptmann is the direct product of the New Germany which sprang from the Freie Buehne, the Ueberbrettl' and Schall und Rauch impetus, just as Donnay, in Paris, came out of the Chat Noir. And there is no telling what would have been the artistic development of Maeterlinck, Stefan George, Hofmannsthal, and others, without such independent producing incentives. The same may be said of the future of Jacque Copeau and Max Reinhardt and Lugné-Poë.

I have thought it best to give, in the present volume, no examples of the most recent type of dramaturgy, as exemplified in the Capeks' "R. U. R." and "The Insect Comedy", or in Molnar's "Liliom", for I believe that Expressionism at the present is more clearly defined in methods of stage production than in technique of writing. It may be, as it has been in the past, that the elements of treatment for expressionistic drama will be more definitely understood after the novelist has essayed them; though now it appears as though the artist in the theatre is doing more, creatively, than either the novelist or the dramatist, to spread the doctrine.

The theatre, at the present moment, is in a state of imminence; there is no telling at what turn the physical shape of the stage and the numberless improvements in methods of lighting may afford the dramatists vaster opportunities than ever before for poetic illusion, and spiritual inclusiveness and depth not thought of by others. But I believe that whatever change is being consummated, is more insistently being wrought by the scenic artists and stage directors, than by the dramatists themselves — who are benefitting by these physical improvements. So I am content to hint at the next step in dramaturgy, rather than define it by example. I am, nevertheless, certain that, like all evolutionary change, this next step could never be without the revolutionary and transitional efforts, of which this volume contains some of the most striking examples.

There is no better way of arriving at a comprehension of the artist's invasion of the theatre than to note carefully the various expressions of the painter — whatever the medium used, whether light or pigment. One must know of Gordon Craig's theories, of Appia's experiments, of Stanislavsky's directorship, of Reinhardt's large scale of mass and color. Only by so watching and weighing can one fathom the meaning of the producer who tries to reach the tone-drama, — the dominant mood of the motivating theme. Only then can the new terms, like Expressionism — the direct contribution of Art — be fully appreciated.[1]

And, just as it is necessary to ground oneself in the side-issues of the theatre, which are likely to revolutionize the area of the dramatist's vision, so, in the days which ushered in the style of naturalism and realism, currents and countercurrents have to be as sharply watched, and related or differentiated. We find such points of view maintained in Augustin Filon's "De Dumas à Rostand", in René Doumic's "De Scribe à Ibsen." The French have a substantial bibliography of modern drama tendencies: such a title as Zola's "La naturalisme au théâtre" is self-revelatory of their scope.

[1] In "The Theatre of Tomorrow" (Boni and Liveright, 1921), Kenneth Macgowan has compiled a serviceable "Bibliographical Appendix" relating to stage development; and his "Continental Stagecraft" (Harcourt, 1922) is suggestive, as a first-hand survey, of what was to be seen in the European theatre during the summer of 1922, vivified by striking illustrations in color and black and white, which Robert Edmond Jones contributed to the volume. The reader will find essential Huntley Carter's "New Spirit in Drama and Art" (1912) and "The Theatre of Max Reinhardt" (1914); Jacques Rouché's "L'art théâtral moderne" (1910); Gordon Craig's "On the Art of the Theatre" (1911), "Toward a New Theatre" (1913), and "The Theatre — Advancing" (1919), and Appia's "Die Musik und die Inscenierung" (1899). A valuable contribution is promised in Constantin Stanislavsky's "My Life in Art."

My method of selection in the present volume has been simple enough: to take the outstanding figures in eight countries, and have them each represented by an outstanding play, in as effective a translation as could be procured. This latter specification is not always so easy a matter for the Editor as might be supposed. That handicap was felt in the preparation of my "Representative One-Act Plays by Continental Authors", when it was brought forcibly before me that the translator's lot — which is the sinking of personal expression — is not a fittingly recognized one; it does not get him far on the creative road, if he wishes to do independent creation. For that reason, much of the translating done in America is perfunctory, stereotyped, wooden. But it is the best that can be procured until the time arrives when men and women can be found who will devote as much feeling for the task as was possessed by Charles Henry Meltzer, when he gave the free rendering of Hauptmann's "The Sunken Bell", by Alfred Sutre when he made his version of Maeterlinck's "Monna Vanna", and by Arthur Symons in his rendering of Verhaeren's "The Dawn".

The foreign author nearly always suffers by translation; it is impossible to judge his artistry, which lies in words, in the sheer rhythm of his prose and verse, if these are not given their full value. The translator has often all he can do to convey the meaning. Imagine the well-nigh impossible task of catching the lights and shadows — the subtle play on words — in Rostand's "Chantecler". The French social drama likewise suffers; something seems to go out of the dialogue as soon as it is put into English. I should like to have reproduced here these plays in their original language. But then there would have been my one purpose sacrificed for the sake of a point of criticism proven: we must rest satisfied that in translation, at least, we are getting near a field whose gates would be entirely shut to many were it not for the continued practise of translation which is becoming more and more general in this country.

For it is absolutely necessary that those interested in the theatre be brought into as close touch as possible with every variation of drama that has effected technique; just as it is essential for philosophers to know Bergson and Haeckel. It is perhaps easier to surmount the barriers of language in technical books where style is not so fundamentally necessary to grasp as content; just as it is easier to catch the spirit of a lyric in French or German than to translate Hofmannsthal's longer pieces for the stage. I am convinced that both to the general reader and to the student, a knowledge of the plays — contained in their entirety — in this volume, is necessary, not only for the rare cultural value to be had in the reading of all good plays, but as being mileposts in the development of that world drama — of which the English development, as measured in my "Representative British Dramas: Victorian and Modern", is an essential part. Could we not say with impunity that without Brieux there would be no Shaw's "Doctor's Dilemma" period; that without Hauptmann there would have been no Galsworthy of the double standard of morality and justice?

The ideal method of presentment in an anthology is never the practical way — to offer plays in graphic contrast: I mean to give Ibsen's "Ghosts" and then "The Wild Duck" which was a spiritual reaction against materials that seared his soul, and which cartooned both himself and his method. What could be more striking in juxtaposition than Maeterlinck's "Pélleas and Mélisande", pale beauty illustrative of his marionette theory, with "Monna Vanna", ripe passion of womanhood, revelatory of his change in dramatic theory? These foreign authors are all

many-sided. Is one to judge of Hauptmann entirely by "The Sunken Bell", when there is "The Weavers" to consider? Yet granting "The Weavers", does not "The Sunken Bell" denote a spiritual shifting, a personal change which makes it autobiographically significant, to say nothing of its artistic worth? One must needs consider carefully the personal touches in the novels of D'Annunzio, Strindberg, Hauptmann, Sudermann, to say nothing of Tchekhoff, whose thumb-nail sketches in his short stories proclaim him more happy in that medium than in the dramatic form, whether the one-act incident or the longer play. And surely the fragments of philosophy in Maeterlinck's "The Bluebird" and "The Betrothal" must be amplified by a closer reading of Maeterlinck, the essayist. The foreign author is not wholly, completely, a man of the theatre: or, we might put it in a more potent way and say that on the Continent, the theatre is far closer wed to literature than it is in America.

We have reached that period (1923) when the older men are still active, still a part of the world interest, though I doubt whether Hauptmann will ever again create with the same vigor that marked his earlier period. Certainly D'Annunzio's ardent escapade in aeronautics and his political heroics in Fiume give him as definite a position outside of art as Paderewski's acceptance of the Premiership of Poland, which took him outside the confines of music. Until such personalia are published as will throw light on such activities, a man's full portrait cannot be attempted. There are not any more fascinating letters to be read than those of Tchekhoff to his family, but when one hears that there are still other letters to be issued, written after his marriage to the actress, Olga Knipper, one hesitates to fix him too definitely, though his first letters and his note-books are sufficient to mark the huge merits of the man. The publication of the first section of Sudermann's autobiography, which is called in translation "The Book of My Youth", indicates clearly the valuable materials which, coupled with the autobiographical experiences of his career, point to sources from which his future biographer will surely draw. Can one deny that much light was thrown upon the working methods of Ibsen by the publication of those first drafts of his plays which marked his ideas in evolution?

I emphasize these new data which are coming to light for a striking reason: there are certain influences, inheritances, environments in a man's life that one must accentuate, not for the artistic understanding of his play — for drama must stand or fall on its independent effect — but for the deeper motives which actuated him while writing, and the still deeper motive which made him choose the theme for artistic use. For example, "The Weavers" is a profoundly moving study of a family group, under economic strain, yet its dedication to Hauptmann's grandfather, himself a weaver, suggests its personal value which connects the dramatist very intimately with the materials of which he makes use. There are, therefore, in this collection of plays, biographical significances for their inclusion, which would take more space than can be allowed for their complete indication.

I have, because of this limitation of space, been particular to make my bibliographies as complete as possible; taken in conjunction with similar materials in my "Representative One-Act Plays by Continental Authors", the student has an ample key to open all locks which will disclose those forces behind the modern movement in drama. It is to be hoped that the perusal of the plays themselves will impress upon the reader those varying differences in dealing with life which the literary critics have classified under the debatable heads of Naturalism, Realism, Romanticism, Symbolism, and the like.

Yet, after seeing the Moscow Art Theatre performances, which have been the outstanding feature of the 1922–1923 dramatic season in New York, I cannot but feel that all profound workers, in whatever division they place themselves, are eager for the same artistic results. Stanislavsky, staunch maintainer of small details and their cumulative effectiveness, has shown, in his presentment of Tchekhoff's "The Cherry Orchard" and "The Three Sisters", that Realism, as practised in this Russian art theatre, has a spiritual significance and an edifying effect on audiences as though materials were offered in presentational form rather than representational. He rather, by his practise, strengthened the cause of Realism. Such Realism as his is not antiquated. So I await with eagerness his written plea for what has been his whole work in the theatre, when he publishes his "My Life in Art", and his more technical work on the evolution of the Actor and his Technique. Who knows what artistic philosophy these books may reinstate!

The Editor of an anthology always faces problems. I have stated most of them elsewhere. I have tried to accord with the title of my book: I believe I have made the plays representative. And I feel they are all significant. I have been fortunate in being able to secure many adequate translations, and it is always a pleasure to thank those who have aided me in my purpose. The translators are the first among these.

Dates are only significant as they place a play in its proper position. Human motives are of greater value, and are far more interesting to the general reader. Moreover, critical data are added to this as an introduction to each play — that is all an Editor can be asked to do in a collection of this character, unless he write a whole book on the Continental Drama, and leave the texts of the plays alone. My bibliographies contain the names of many to whom my thanks are due for their kindly interest and their helpful suggestion during the course of my researches for this volume. And appreciation is accorded my publishers, whose interest and assistance at every step have been unfailing.

MONTROSE J. MOSES.

NEW HARTFORD,
CONNECTICUT,
July, 1923.

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE vii

1884. THE WILD DUCK. Henrik Ibsen 3
Translated by Mrs. Frances E. Archer.

1903. THE LONELY WAY. Arthur Schnitzler 59
Translated from the German by Edwin Björkman.

1900. THE FIRES OF ST. JOHN. Hermann Sudermann 103
Translated and adapted by Charles Swickard.

1896. THE SUNKEN BELL. Gerhart Hauptmann 143
Freely rendered into English verse by Charles Henry Meltzer.

1896. THE SEA-GULL. Anton Tchekhoff 191
Translated from the Russian by George Calderon.

1906. THE LIFE OF MAN. Leonid Andreyeff 227
Translated from the Russian by Thomas Seltzer.

1904. THE DAUGHTER OF JORIO. Gabriele D'Annunzio 265
Translated from the Italian by Charlotte Porter, Pietro Isola, and Alice Henry.

1900. LIKE FALLING LEAVES. Giuseppe Giacosa 319
Translated from the Italian by Edith and Allan Updegraff.

1908. THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE. Charles Frederic Nirdlinger . . . 361
After the verse of José Echegaray's EL GRAN GALEOTO.

1907. THE BONDS OF INTEREST. Jacinto Benavente 401
Translated from the Spanish by John Garrett Underhill.

1897. CYRANO DE BERGERAC. Edmond Rostand 435
Translated from the French by Gertrude Hall.

1882. THE VULTURES. Henry Becque 503
Translated from the French by Freeman Tilden.

PAGE

1895. Lovers. Maurice Donnay 555
Translated from the French by Barrett H. Clark.

1903. Monna Vanna. Maurice Maeterlinck 591
Translated from the French by Alfred Sutro.

1898. The Dawn. Émile Verhaeren 627
Translated from the French by Arthur Symons.

Bibliography 667

REPRESENTATIVE CONTINENTAL DRAMAS:

REVOLUTIONARY AND TRANSITIONAL

THE WILD DUCK

(*1884*)

By Henrik Ibsen

IBSEN AND "THE WILD DUCK"

When the great Norwegian dramatist wrote "Peer Gynt", every critic, having tabulated his use of the symbol, began looking for the meaning, began inventing keys to open the mystery of his meaning. "Why not regard it as poetry?" suggested Ibsen; and no one took the hint. One never gave Ibsen credit, in the initial days, for his high flights of sheer imaginative creativeness, which characterize some of his work, because they identified him wholly with the burning realism he so continually used with striking results.

The later plays of Ibsen continue the motives of his earlier dramas. Of all the modern dramatists of the period, he had the most persistent and the most consistent development. One play led to another. After his saga period, what he wrote represented truly a concerted action on his part to bring about the revolution in the spirit of man, of which he so continually spoke in his letters to his friends. But it must have been a great fag on the nerves of such an irascible nature as his to be constantly stirring up revolution in the spirit of man. And, while Ibsen won out against a conservative generation; while, as a dramatist, he had the satisfaction of watching his plays pass into many editions as soon as they were published, he nevertheless found himself a storm-centre of discussion, and an object of anathema, whenever some new drama of his was announced, and even before it had been written.

For a time he seemed to enjoy this tumult. He seemed to relish Kierkegaard's philosophy that "the strongest man in the world is he who stands alone." But he who stands constantly alone is an uncompromiser with the world. He is very likely, in daily matters, to find himself as lonely a being as, in his search for the ideal, Brand found himself to be, when he made, in his upward climb, the uncompromising demand for "All or nothing."

"He who finds himself," says Matthew Arnold, "loses his misery." But there arrived a period in Ibsen's life when, after having found himself, he likewise found his misery. He seared himself in the writing of "Ghosts." He seemed to have caught a species of moral fever, after having so relentlessly held up the evil consequences of the past.

Not only that but, believing as he did that the minority is always right, Ibsen defined democracy as being in need of a strong aristocracy, not of birth, not of purse, not even of intellect, but an aristocracy of Will, of character. When he came to write "An Enemy of the People", we find the fruition in his own mind of Kierkegaard's philosophy. But it was after this that he suddenly awoke to the fact that a moral policeman's lot is not a happy one. He seems suddenly to have lost grip of his reformatory spirit, and to have turned his attention, not to other people and their worm-eaten ideals, but to himself — examining himself in the same relentless fashion with which he was accustomed to scrutinize others. It seems, verily, that Ibsen began suffering from a sick conscience at having gone about the

world stripping it of its frauds and indecencies, of its spiritual shallowness, of its stagnant inheritances. He began to ask himself, "Is the world better for what I have done?" "Would people be any the worse if I should leave alone those lies upon which they live?"

He further argued, "I have gone about, holding up the lie in 'The Pillars of Society', in 'An Enemy of the People', and I have literally made a nuisance of myself in the theatre of the nineteenth century — for its own good, no doubt, but still a nuisance."

At first this discovery gave him a shock; then, although there are some who will deny it, Ibsen began to laugh at himself. In that laughter he considered the character of Gregers Werle. At times in his life he had fluctuated between the philosophies of Brand and Peer Gynt in his own personal attitude. As he often claimed, Brand, with his cry of "All" was himself in his best nature. Peer Gynt, with his self-sufficiency, was himself in his intellectual isolation.

I have in mind two pictures of Ibsen. The one is seated at his club window, whether in Christiania or in Rome, fortified behind a newspaper, with his chair so placed that he could easily look into a mirror, and study, unseen, the people who came into the room. The other is the portrait of the little man on his walks, with his dapper frock coat and his carefully brushed top hat, in the bottom of which — so gossip whispered — he had secreted a small vanity glass, into which every now and then he would gaze upon his own countenance.

Who knows but, while exploring into the depths of this top hat, he found the true portrait of Gregers Werle, and set out to have fun with himself, to be ironically cartoonish! But Ibsen's humor always had a serious basis, and a no more acutely intelligent drama is to be had than "The Wild Duck." Always, in the social plays of Henrik Ibsen, one is asked to consider a very active past reacting on the immediate plot, and skilfully unfolded along with the story. If "A Doll's House" is a striking instance of the insistent way in which Ibsen dealt with Nora's past and those inheritances which had their tragic consequences on the lives of Dr. Rank and Mrs. Linden, — even more strikingly active and more surely handled is the past which broods over the commonplace family of Hialmar Ekdal in "The Wild Duck." Here Ibsen's dialogue is surcharged with the past, which is the *deus ex machina* of the play. The artistry of such handling as Ibsen gives here is a triumph.

In historical position, "The Wild Duck" comes between "An Enemy of the People" and "Rosmersholm." It was written in June, 1883, while Ibsen was in Rome, indulging in what he claimed to Georges Brandes was a variety of "mad fancies" which "must find an outlet." "But," he adds, "as the play is neither to deal with the supreme court nor the right of absolute veto, and not even with the removal of the sign of union from the flag, it can hardly count upon arousing much interest in Norway." Thus did Ibsen suggest how little he had in common with his own country, though he illustrated in his fascinating letters that a man, in order to see his own country truly, must live away from it in self-appointed exile, as he had done for many years.

He finished his first sketch for the play toward the latter part of June — a sketch the value of which the student of Ibsen may determine by consulting Chater's "From Ibsen's Workshop." In September, of 1883, the play was finished, and the manuscript of "The Wild Duck" sent to his publisher, Hegel. Ibsen expressed regret that he had to part with his characters, whom he not only loved for them-

selves, but thought would offer the "actor tribe" excellent opportunity for acting. There was a peculiar exhilaration on his part after the play was completed. He thought it a new vein for him — Archer called it the culmination of an old one — and it was the Norwegian's fondest hope that "The Wild Duck" would be a pathfinder for the new generation of playwrights. As an illustration of Ibsen's vogue — any play of his being a literary event throughout Europe — "The Wild Duck" was issued in an edition of eight thousand copies on November 11, 1884, and a second edition was called for by December 1 of the same year. Its first production was in Bergen, on January 9, 1885.

Gregers Werle — Ibsen's conception of himself in the mood which prompted the writing of "Ghosts" — is determined to tear down illusions wherever he finds them. But one sees, in the course of "The Wild Duck", that, entering the Ekdal family, while he will endeavor to put them on a basis of transfiguration and ennoblement, the cards of illusion tumbling about them will well-nigh crush this very commonplace family, held together by half-truths and superstitions. Gregers is a moralist of the most dangerous sort; he has none of the moral integrity of Brand and none of the humor of Peer Gynt. He wakes up too late — as far as the Ekdal family is concerned — to find that he is a mere bungler, a "thirteenth at the table of life." This is Ibsen excoriating himself for having written "Ghosts." The regretful Ibsen is seen in the person of Dr. Relling; it is he who turns to Gregers and says that, after all, it is necessary for some people in the world to go about creating the life-illusion. Take this illusion from certain people, and they would be wrecked.

For many years, Ibsen's pen had been moved to tell individuals and communities of the falsity of their lives and their institutions. One must thoroughly understand this to recognize the rich irony of Gregers Werle's position. "No man," says Brand, "can see Jehovah and live." Certain compromises in life must be made in order to exist. So claims Ibsen in "The Wild Duck." The philosophy of "No compromise" had worried him ever since he carried Brand to the heights and to death. It was not that Ibsen ever hedged, that he ever weakened in his determined championship of the eternal verities. But, being human, he had his moments of doubt as to the efficacy of relentless self-scrutiny, and, what is more serious, the scrutiny of others, leaving them stark and wounded. After "Ghosts", a pessimistic mood seized him regarding his own work. It was as though he had said to himself: "What's the use of it anyway? People still live on their lies, and they seem to be perfectly happy and content." Such a conclusion is reached by Gregers Werle — after he has wrought his havoc.

No sooner was "The Wild Duck" finished than Ibsen took heart again. He had had his literary "blues", and he had rebounded after a visit to Norway, where he was irritated by everything he saw. Evidently, when he began writing "Rosmersholm", he had come to the conclusion that it was not well to stop putting torpedoes beneath lie foundations. As long as he lived, he would still preach revolution in the spirit of man, and if "will power and not lip service will do away with rottenness" (as he said in his "Brand" period), then through will power (which he would continue to exercise) there might still be some hope for his share in the revolution. He had had fun with the caricatures of himself. He seems, in "Rosmersholm", his next play, to have gained his balance once more.

THE WILD DUCK

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

By HENRIK IBSEN

TRANSLATED BY MRS. FRANCES E. ARCHER

CHARACTERS

WERLE, *a merchant, manufacturer, etc.*
GREGERS WERLE, *his son*
OLD EKDAL
HIALMAR EKDAL, *his son, a photographer*
GINA EKDAL, *Hialmar's wife*
HEDVIG, *their daughter, a girl of fourteen*
MRS. SÖRBY, *Werle's housekeeper*
RELLING, *a doctor*
MOLVIK, *ex-student of theology*
GRÅBERG, *Werle's bookkeeper*
PETTERSEN, *Werle's servant*
JENSEN, *a hired waiter*
A FLABBY GENTLEMAN
A THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN
A SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN
Six other gentlemen, guests at Werle's dinner-party
Several hired waiters

The first act passes in Werle's house, the remaining acts at Hialmar Ekdal's

Pronunciation of Names: Gregers Werle = Grayghers Verlë; Hialmar Ekdal = Yalmar Aykdal; Gina = Gheena; Gråberg = Groberg; Jensen = Yensen

This play is here reprinted for the reading public through the courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons.

COPYRIGHT, 1907,
BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.

THE WILD DUCK

ACT I

At WERLE'S *house. A richly and comfortably furnished study; bookcases and upholstered furniture; a writing-table, with papers and documents, in the centre of the room; lighted lamps with green shades, giving a subdued light. At the back, open folding-doors with curtains drawn back. Within is seen a large and handsome room, brilliantly lighted with lamps and branching candlesticks. In front, on the right (in the study), a small baize door leads into* WERLE'S *office. On the left, in front, a fire-place with a glowing coal fire, and farther back a double door leading into the dining-room.*

WERLE'S *servant,* PETTERSEN, *in livery, and* JENSEN, *the hired waiter, in black, are putting the study in order. In the large room, two or three other hired waiters are moving about, arranging things and lighting more candles. From the dining-room, the hum of conversation and laughter of many voices are heard; a glass is tapped with a knife; silence follows, and a toast is proposed; shouts of "Bravo!" and then again a buzz of conversation.*

PETTERSEN [*lights a lamp on the chimney-place and places a shade over it*]. Hark to them, Jensen! now the old man's on his legs holding a long palaver about Mrs. Sörby.

JENSEN [*pushing forward an arm-chair*]. Is it true, what folks say, that they're — very good friends, eh?

PETTERSEN. Lord knows.

JENSEN. I've heard tell as he's been a lively customer in his day.

PETTERSEN. May be.

JENSEN. And he's giving this spread in honour of his son, they say.

PETTERSEN. Yes. His son came home yesterday.

JENSEN. This is the first time I ever heard as Mr. Werle had a son.

PETTERSEN. Oh yes, he has a son, right enough. But he's a fixture, as you might say, up at the Höidal works. He's never once come to town all the years I've been in service here.

A WAITER [*in the doorway of the other room*]. Pettersen, here's an old fellow wanting ——

PETTERSEN [*mutters*]. The devil —— who's this now?

[OLD EKDAL *appears from the right, in the inner room. He is dressed in a threadbare overcoat with a high collar; he wears woollen mittens, and carries in his hand a stick and a fur cap. Under his arm, a brown paper parcel. Dirty red-brown wig and small grey moustache*]

PETTERSEN [*goes towards him*]. Good Lord — what do you want here?

EKDAL [*in the doorway*]. Must get into the office, Pettersen.

PETTERSEN. The office was closed an hour ago, and ——

EKDAL. So they told me at the front door. But Gråberg's in there still. Let me slip in this way, Pettersen; there's a good fellow. [*Points towards the baize door*] It's not the first time I've come this way.

PETTERSEN. Well, you may pass. [*Opens the door*] But mind you go out again the proper way, for we've got company.

EKDAL. I know, I know — h'm! Thanks, Pettersen, good old friend! Thanks! [*Mutters softly*] Ass!

[*He goes into the office;* PETTERSEN *shuts the door after him*]

JENSEN. Is he one of the office people?

PETTERSEN. No, he's only an outside hand that does odd jobs of copy-

ing. But he's been a tip-topper in his day, has old Ekdal.

JENSEN. You can see he's been through a lot.

PETTERSEN. Yes; he was an army officer, you know.

JENSEN. You don't say so?

PETTERSEN. No mistake about it. But then he went into the timber trade or something of the sort. They say he once played Mr. Werle a very nasty trick. They were partners in the Höidal works at the time. Oh, I know old Ekdal well, I do. Many a nip of bitters and bottle of ale we two have drunk at Madam Eriksen's.

JENSEN. He don't look as if he'd much to stand treat with.

PETTERSEN. Why, bless you, Jensen, it's me that stands treat. I always think there's no harm in being a bit civil to folks that have seen better days.

JENSEN. Did he go bankrupt then?

PETTERSEN. Worse than that. He went to prison.

JENSEN. To prison!

PETTERSEN. Or perhaps it was the Penitentiary. [*Listens*] Sh! They're leaving the table.

[*The dining-room door is thrown open from within, by a couple of waiters.* MRS. SÖRBY *comes out conversing with two gentlemen. Gradually the whole company follows, amongst them* WERLE. *Last come* HIALMAR EKDAL *and* GREGERS WERLE]

MRS. SÖRBY [*in passing, to the servant*]. Tell them to serve the coffee in the music-room, Pettersen.

PETTERSEN. Very well, Madam.

[*She goes with the two gentlemen into the inner room, and thence out to the right.* PETTERSEN *and* JENSEN *go out the same way*]

A FLABBY GENTLEMAN [*to a* THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN]. Whew! What a dinner! — It was no joke to do it justice!

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. Oh, with a little good-will one can get through a lot in three hours.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Yes, but afterwards, afterwards, my dear Chamberlain!

A THIRD GENTLEMAN. I hear the coffee and maraschino are to be served in the music-room.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Bravo! Then perhaps Mrs. Sörby will play us something.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN [*in a low voice*]. I hope Mrs. Sörby mayn't play us a tune we don't like, one of these days!

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Oh no, not she! Bertha will never turn against her old friends.

[*They laugh and pass into the inner room*]

WERLE [*in a low voice, dejectedly*]. I don't think anybody noticed it, Gregers.

GREGERS [*looks at him*]. Noticed what?

WERLE. Did you not notice it either?

GREGERS. What do you mean?

WERLE. We were thirteen at table.

GREGERS. Indeed? Were there thirteen of us?

WERLE [*glances towards* HIALMAR EKDAL]. Our usual party is twelve. [*To the others*] This way, gentlemen!

[WERLE *and the others, all except* HIALMAR *and* GREGERS, *go out by the back, to the right*]

HIALMAR [*who has overheard the conversation*]. You ought not to have invited me, Gregers.

GREGERS. What! Not ask my best and only friend to a party supposed to be in my honour ——?

HIALMAR. But I don't think your father likes it. You see I am quite outside his circle.

GREGERS. So I hear. But I wanted to see you and have a talk with you, and I certainly sha'n't be staying long. — Ah, we two old schoolfellows have drifted far apart from each other. It must be sixteen or seventeen years since we met.

HIALMAR. Is it so long?

GREGERS. It is indeed. Well, how goes it with you? You look well. You have put on flesh, and grown almost stout.

HIALMAR. Well, "stout" is scarcely the word; but I daresay I look a little more of a man than I used to.

GREGERS. Yes, you do; your outer man is in first-rate condition.

HIALMAR [*in a tone of gloom*]. Ah, but the inner man! That is a very different matter, I can tell you! Of course you know of the terrible catastrophe that has befallen me and mine since last we met.

GREGERS [*more softly*]. How are things going with your father now?

HIALMAR. Don't let us talk of it, old fellow. Of course my poor unhappy

father lives with me. He hasn't another soul in the world to care for him. But you can understand that this is a miserable subject for me. — Tell me, rather, how you have been getting on up at the works.

GREGERS. I have had a delightfully lonely time of it — plenty of leisure to think and think about things. Come over here; we may as well make ourselves comfortable.

[*He seats himself in an arm-chair by the fire and draws* HIALMAR *down into another alongside of it*]

HIALMAR [*sentimentally*]. After all, Gregers, I thank you for inviting me to your father's table; for I take it as a sign that you have got over your feeling against me.

GREGERS [*surprised*]. How could you imagine I had any feeling against you?

HIALMAR. You had at first, you know.

GREGERS. How at first?

HIALMAR. After the great misfortune. It was natural enough that you should. Your father was within an ace of being drawn into that — well, that terrible business.

GREGERS. Why should that give me any feeling against you? Who can have put that into your head?

HIALMAR. I know it did, Gregers; your father told me so himself.

GREGERS [*starts*]. My father! Oh, indeed. H'm. — Was that why you never let me hear from you? — not a single word.

HIALMAR. Yes.

GREGERS. Not even when you made up your mind to become a photographer?

HIALMAR. Your father said I had better not write to you at all, about anything.

GREGERS [*looking straight before him*]. Well well, perhaps he was right. — But tell me now, Hialmar: are you pretty well satisfied with your present position?

HIALMAR [*with a little sigh*]. Oh yes, I am; I have really no cause to complain. At first, as you may guess, I felt it a little strange. It was such a totally new state of things for me. But of course my whole circumstances were totally changed. Father's utter, irretrievable ruin, — the shame and disgrace of it, Gregers ——

GREGERS [*affected*]. Yes, yes; I understand.

HIALMAR. I couldn't think of remaining at college; there wasn't a shilling to spare; on the contrary, there were debts — mainly to your father I believe ——

GREGERS. H'm ——

HIALMAR. In short, I thought it best to break, once for all, with my old surroundings and associations. It was your father that specially urged me to it; and since he interested himself so much in me ——

GREGERS. My father did?

HIALMAR. Yes, you surely knew that, didn't you? Where do you suppose I found the money to learn photography, and to furnish a studio and make a start? All that costs a pretty penny, I can tell you.

GREGERS. And my father provided the money?

HIALMAR. Yes, my dear fellow, didn't you know? I understood him to say he had written to you about it.

GREGERS. Not a word about his part in the business. He must have forgotten it. Our correspondence has always been purely a business one. So it was my father that ——!

HIALMAR. Yes, certainly. He didn't wish it to be generally known; but he it was. And of course it was he, too, that put me in a position to marry. Don't you — don't you know about that either?

GREGERS. No, I haven't heard a word of it. [*Shakes him by the arm*] But, my dear Hialmar, I can't tell you what pleasure all this gives me — pleasure, and self-reproach. I have perhaps done my father injustice after all — in some things. This proves that he has a heart. It shows a sort of compunction ——

HIALMAR. Compunction ——?

GREGERS. Yes, yes — whatever you like to call it. Oh, I can't tell you how glad I am to hear this of father. — So you are a married man, Hialmar! That is further than I shall ever get. Well, I hope you are happy in your married life?

HIALMAR. Yes, thoroughly happy. She is as good and capable a wife as any man could wish for. And she is by no means without culture.

GREGERS [*rather surprised*]. No, of course not.

HIALMAR. You see, life is itself an education. Her daily intercourse with me —— And then we know one or

two rather remarkable men, who come a good deal about us. I assure you, you would hardly know Gina again.

GREGERS. Gina?

HIALMAR. Yes; had you forgotten that her name was Gina?

GREGERS. Whose name? I haven't the slightest idea ——

HIALMAR. Don't you remember that she used to be in service here?

GREGERS [*looks at him*]. Is it Gina Hansen ——?

HIALMAR. Yes, of course it is Gina Hansen.

GREGERS. —— who kept house for us during the last year of my mother's illness?

HIALMAR. Yes, exactly. But, my dear friend, I'm quite sure your father told you that I was married.

GREGERS [*who has risen*]. Oh yes, he mentioned it; but not that —— [*Walking about the room*] Stay — perhaps he did — now that I think of it. My father always writes such short letters. [*Half seats himself on the arm of the chair*] Now, tell me, Hialmar — this is interesting — how did you come to know Gina — your wife?

HIALMAR. The simplest thing in the world. You know Gina did not stay here long; everything was so much upset at that time, owing to your mother's illness and so forth, that Gina was not equal to it all; so she gave notice and left. That was the year before your mother died — or it may have been the same year.

GREGERS. It was the same year. I was up at the works then. But afterwards ——?

HIALMAR. Well, Gina lived at home with her mother, Madam Hansen, an excellent hard-working woman, who kept a little eating-house. She had a room to let too; a very nice comfortable room.

GREGERS. And I suppose you were lucky enough to secure it?

HIALMAR. Yes; in fact, it was your father that recommended it to me. So it was there, you see, that I really came to know Gina.

GREGERS. And then you got engaged?

HIALMAR. Yes. It doesn't take young people long to fall in love ——; h'm ——

GREGERS [*rises and moves about a little*]. Tell me: was it after your engagement — was it then that my father — I mean was it then that you began to take up photography?

HIALMAR. Yes, precisely. I wanted to make a start, and to set up house as soon as possible; and your father and I agreed that this photography business was the readiest way. Gina thought so too. Oh, and there was another thing in its favour, by-the-bye: it happened, luckily, that Gina had learnt to retouch.

GREGERS. That chimed in marvellously.

HIALMAR [*pleased, rises*]. Yes, didn't it? Don't you think it was a marvellous piece of luck?

GREGERS. Oh, unquestionably. My father seems to have been almost a kind of providence for you.

HIALMAR [*with emotion*]. He did not forsake his old friend's son in the hour of his need. For he has a heart, you see.

MRS. SÖRBY [*enters, arm-in-arm with* WERLE]. Nonsense, my dear Mr. Werle; you mustn't stop there any longer staring at all the lights. It's very bad for you.

WERLE [*lets go her arm and passes his hand over his eyes*]. I daresay you are right.

[PETTERSEN *and* JENSEN *carry round refreshment trays*]

MRS. SÖRBY [*to the Guests in the other room*]. This way, if you please, gentlemen. Whoever wants a glass of punch must be so good as to come in here.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN [*comes up to* MRS. SÖRBY]. Surely, it isn't possible that you have suspended our cherished right to smoke?

MRS. SÖRBY. Yes. No smoking here, in Mr. Werle's sanctum, Chamberlain.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. When did you enact these stringent amendments on the cigar law, Mrs. Sörby?

MRS. SÖRBY. After the last dinner, Chamberlain, when certain persons permitted themselves to overstep the mark.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. And may one never overstep the mark a little bit, Madame Bertha? Not the least little bit?

MRS. SÖRBY. Not in any respect whatsoever, Mr. Balle.

[*Most of the Guests have assembled in the study; servants hand round glasses of punch*]

WERLE [*to* HIALMAR, *who is standing*

beside a table]. What are you studying so intently, Ekdal?

HIALMAR. Only an album, Mr. Werle.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN [*who is wandering about*]. Ah, photographs! They are quite in your line of course.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN [*in an armchair*]. Haven't you brought any of your own with you?

HIALMAR. No, I haven't.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. You ought to have; it's very good for the digestion to sit and look at pictures.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. And it contributes to the entertainment, you know.

THE SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN. And all contributions are thankfully received.

MRS. SÖRBY. The Chamberlains think that when one is invited out to dinner, one ought to exert oneself a little in return, Mr. Ekdal.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Where one dines so well, that duty becomes a pleasure.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. And when it's a case of the struggle for existence, you know ——

MRS. SÖRBY. I quite agree with you!

[*They continue the conversation, with laughter and joking*]

GREGERS [*softly*]. You must join in, Hialmar.

HIALMAR [*writhing*]. What am I to talk about?

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Don't you think, Mr. Werle, that Tokay may be considered one of the more wholesome sorts of wine?

WERLE [*by the fire*]. I can answer for the Tokay you had to-day, at any rate; it's of one of the very finest seasons. Of course you would notice that.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Yes, it had a remarkably delicate flavour.

HIALMAR [*shyly*]. Is there any difference between the seasons?

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN [*laughs*]. Come! That's good!

WERLE [*smiles*]. It really doesn't pay to set fine wine before you.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. Tokay is like photographs, Mr. Ekdal: they both need sunshine. Am I not right?

HIALMAR. Yes, light is important no doubt.

MRS. SÖRBY. And it's exactly the same with Chamberlains — they, too, depend very much on sunshine,[1] as the saying is.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. Oh fie! That's a very threadbare sarcasm!

THE SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN. Mrs. Sörby is coming out ——

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. —— and at our expense, too. [*Holds up his finger reprovingly*] Oh, Madame Bertha, Madame Bertha!

MRS. SÖRBY. Yes, and there's not the least doubt that the seasons differ greatly. The old vintages are the finest.

THE SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN. Do you reckon me among the old vintages?

MRS. SÖRBY. Oh, far from it.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. There now! But me, dear Mrs. Sörby ——?

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Yes, and me? What vintage should you say that we belong to?

MRS. SÖRBY. Why, to the sweet vintages, gentlemen.

[*She sips a glass of punch. The gentlemen laugh and flirt with her*]

WERLE. Mrs. Sörby can always find a loop-hole — when she wants to. Fill your glasses, gentlemen! Pettersen, will you see to it ——! Gregers, suppose we have a glass together. [GREGERS *does not move*] Won't you join us, Ekdal? I found no opportunity of drinking with you at table.

[GRÅBERG, *the bookkeeper, looks in at the baize door*]

GRÅBERG. Excuse me, sir, but I can't get out.

WERLE. Have you been locked in again?

GRÅBERG. Yes, and Flakstad has carried off the keys.

WERLE. Well, you can pass out this way.

GRÅBERG. But there's some one else ——

WERLE. All right; come through, both of you. Don't be afraid.

[GRÅBERG *and* OLD EKDAL *come out of the office*]

WERLE [*involuntarily*]. Ugh!

[*The laughter and talk among the Guests cease.* HIALMAR *starts at the sight of his father, puts down his glass, and turns towards the fireplace*]

EKDAL [*does not look up, but makes*

[1] The "sunshine" of Court favour.

little bows to both sides as he passes, murmuring]. Beg pardon, come the wrong way. Door locked — door locked. Beg pardon.

[*He and* GRÅBERG *go out by the back, to the right*]

WERLE [*between his teeth*]. That idiot Gråberg!

GREGERS [*open-mouthed and staring, to* HIALMAR]. Why surely that wasn't ——!

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. What's the matter? Who was it?

GREGERS. Oh, nobody, only the bookkeeper and some one with him.

THE SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN [*to* HIALMAR]. Did you know that man?

HIALMAR. I don't know — I didn't notice ——

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. What the deuce has come over every one?

[*He joins another group who are talking softly*]

MRS. SÖRBY [*whispers to the servant*]. Give him something to take with him; — something good, mind.

PETTERSEN [*nods*]. I'll see to it.

[*Goes out*]

GREGERS [*softly and with emotion, to* HIALMAR]. So that was really he!

HIALMAR. Yes.

GREGERS. And you could stand there and deny that you knew him!

HIALMAR [*whispers vehemently*]. But how could I ——!

GREGERS. —— acknowledge your own father?

HIALMAR [*with pain*]. Oh, if you were in my place ——

[*The conversation amongst the Guests, which has been carried on in a low tone, now swells into constrained joviality*]

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN [*approaching* HIALMAR *and* GREGERS *in a friendly manner*]. Aha! Reviving old college memories, eh? Don't you smoke, Mr. Ekdal? May I give you a light? Oh, by-the-bye, we mustn't ——

HIALMAR. No, thank you, I won't ——

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Haven't you a nice little poem you could recite to us, Mr. Ekdal? You used to recite so charmingly.

HIALMAR. I am sorry I can't remember anything.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Oh, that's a pity. Well, what shall we do, Balle?

[*Both gentlemen move away and pass into the other room*]

HIALMAR [*gloomily*]. Gregers — I am going! When a man has felt the crushing hand of Fate, you see —— Say good-bye to your father for me.

GREGERS. Yes, yes. Are you going straight home?

HIALMAR. Yes. Why?

GREGERS. Oh, because I may perhaps look in on you later.

HIALMAR. No, you mustn't do that. You must not come to my home. Mine is a melancholy abode, Gregers; especially after a splendid banquet like this. We can always arrange to meet somewhere in the town.

MRS. SÖRBY [*who has quietly approached*]. Are you going, Ekdal?

HIALMAR. Yes.

MRS. SÖRBY. Remember me to Gina.

HIALMAR. Thanks.

MRS. SÖRBY. And say I am coming up to see her one of these days.

HIALMAR. Yes, thank you. [*To* GREGERS] Stay here; I will slip out unobserved.

[*He saunters away, then into the other room, and so out to the right*]

MRS. SÖRBY [*softly to the servant, who has come back*]. Well, did you give the old man something?

PETTERSEN. Yes; I sent him off with a bottle of cognac.

MRS. SÖRBY. Oh, you might have thought of something better than that.

PETTERSEN. Oh no, Mrs. Sörby; cognac is what he likes best in the world.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN [*in the doorway with a sheet of music in his hand*]. Shall we play a duet, Mrs. Sörby?

MRS. SÖRBY. Yes, suppose we do.

THE GUESTS. Bravo, bravo!

[*She goes with all the Guests through the back room, out to the right.* GREGERS *remains standing by the fire.* WERLE *is looking for something on the writing-table, and appears to wish that* GREGERS *would go; as* GREGERS *does not move,* WERLE *goes towards the door*]

GREGERS. Father, won't you stay a moment?

WERLE [*stops*]. What is it?

GREGERS. I must have a word with you.

WERLE. Can it not wait till we are alone?

GREGERS. No, it cannot; for perhaps we shall never be alone together.

WERLE [*drawing nearer*]. What do you mean by that?

[*During what follows, the pianoforte is faintly heard from the distant music-room*]

GREGERS. How has that family been allowed to go so miserably to the wall?

WERLE. You mean the Ekdals, I suppose.

GREGERS. Yes, I mean the Ekdals. Lieutenant Ekdal was once so closely associated with you.

WERLE. Much too closely; I have felt that to my cost for many a year. It is thanks to him that I — yes *I* — have had a kind of slur cast upon my reputation.

GREGERS [*softly*]. Are you sure that he alone was to blame?

WERLE. Who else do you suppose ——?

GREGERS. You and he acted together in that affair of the forests ——

WERLE. But was it not Ekdal that drew the map of the tracts we had bought — that fraudulent map! It was he who felled all that timber illegally on Government ground. In fact, the whole management was in his hands. I was quite in the dark as to what Lieutenant Ekdal was doing.

GREGERS. Lieutenant Ekdal himself seems to have been very much in the dark as to what he was doing.

WERLE. That may be. But the fact remains that he was found guilty and I acquitted.

GREGERS. Yes, I know that nothing was proved against you.

WERLE. Acquittal is acquittal. Why do you rake up these old miseries that turned my hair grey before its time? Is that the sort of thing you have been brooding over up there, all these years? I can assure you, Gregers, here in the town the whole story has been forgotten long ago — so far as *I* am concerned.

GREGERS. But that unhappy Ekdal family.

WERLE. What would you have had me do for the people? When Ekdal came out of prison he was a broken-down being, past all help. There are people in the world who dive to the bottom the moment they get a couple of slugs in their body, and never come to the surface again. You may take my word for it, Gregers, I have done all I could without positively laying myself open to all sorts of suspicion and gossip ——

GREGERS. Suspicion ——? Oh, I see.

WERLE. I have given Ekdal copying to do for the office, and I pay him far, far more for it than his work is worth ——

GREGERS [*without looking at him*]. H'm; that I don't doubt.

WERLE. You laugh? Do you think I am not telling you the truth? Well, I certainly can't refer you to my books, for I never enter payments of that sort.

GREGERS [*smiles coldly*]. No, there are certain payments it is best to keep no account of.

WERLE [*taken aback*]. What do you mean by that?

GREGERS [*mustering up courage*]. Have you entered what it cost you to have Hialmar Ekdal taught photography?

WERLE. I? How "entered" it?

GREGERS. I have learnt that it was you who paid for his training. And I have learnt, too, that it was you who enabled him to set up house so comfortably.

WERLE. Well, and yet you talk as though I had done nothing for the Ekdals! I can assure you these people have cost me enough in all conscience.

GREGERS. Have you entered any of these expenses in your books?

WERLE. Why do you ask?

GREGERS. Oh, I have my reasons. Now tell me: when you interested yourself so warmly in your old friend's son — it was just before his marriage, was it not?

WERLE. Why, deuce take it — after all these years, how can I ——?

GREGERS. You wrote me a letter about that time — a business letter, of course; and in a postscript you mentioned — quite briefly — that Hialmar Ekdal had married a Miss Hansen.

WERLE. Yes, that was quite right. That was her name.

GREGERS. But you did not mention that this Miss Hansen was Gina Hansen — our former housekeeper.

WERLE [*with a forced laugh of derision*]. No; to tell the truth, it didn't occur to me that you were so particularly interested in our former housekeeper.

GREGERS. No more I was. But [*lowers his voice*] there were others in this house who were particularly interested in her.

WERLE. What do you mean by that? [*Flaring up*] You are not alluding to me, I hope?

GREGERS [*softly but firmly*]. Yes, I am alluding to you.

WERLE. And you dare ——! You presume to ——! How can that ungrateful hound — that photographer fellow — how dare he go making such insinuations!

GREGERS. Hialmar has never breathed a word about this. I don't believe he has the faintest suspicion of such a thing.

WERLE. Then where have you got it from? Who can have put such notions in your head?

GREGERS. My poor unhappy mother told me; and that the very last time I saw her.

WERLE. Your mother! I might have known as much! You and she — you always held together. It was she who turned you against me, from the first.

GREGERS. No, it was all that she had to suffer and submit to, until she broke down and came to such a pitiful end.

WERLE. Oh, she had nothing to suffer or submit to; not more than most people, at all events. But there's no getting on with morbid, overstrained creatures — that I have learnt to my cost. — And you could go on nursing such a suspicion — burrowing into all sorts of old rumours and slanders against your own father! I must say, Gregers, I really think that at your age you might find something more useful to do.

GREGERS. Yes, it is high time.

WERLE. Then perhaps your mind would be easier than it seems to be now. What can be your object in remaining up at the works, year out and year in, drudging away like a common clerk, and not drawing a farthing more than the ordinary monthly wage? It is downright folly.

GREGERS. Ah, if I were only sure of that.

WERLE. I understand you well enough. You want to be independent; you won't be beholden to me for anything. Well, now there happens to be an opportunity for you to become independent, your own master in everything.

GREGERS. Indeed? In what way ——?

WERLE. When I wrote you insisting on your coming to town at once — h'm ——

GREGERS. Yes, what is it you really want of me? I have been waiting all day to know.

WERLE. I want to propose that you should enter the firm, as partner.

GREGERS. I? Join your firm? As partner?

WERLE. Yes. It would not involve our being constantly together. You could take over the business here in town, and I should move up to the works.

GREGERS. You would?

WERLE. The fact is, I am not so fit for work as I once was. I am obliged to spare my eyes, Gregers; they have begun to trouble me.

GREGERS. They have always been weak.

WERLE. Not as they are now. And besides, circumstances might possibly make it desirable for me to live up there — for a time, at any rate.

GREGERS. That is certainly quite a new idea to me.

WERLE. Listen, Gregers: there are many things that stand between us; but we are father and son after all. We ought surely to be able to come to some sort of understanding with each other.

GREGERS. Outwardly, you mean, of course?

WERLE. Well, even that would be something. Think it over, Gregers. Don't you think it ought to be possible? Eh?

GREGERS [*looking at him coldly*]. There is something behind all this.

WERLE. How so?

GREGERS. You want to make use of me in some way.

WERLE. In such a close relationship as ours, the one can always be useful to the other.

GREGERS. Yes, so people say.

WERLE. I want very much to have you at home with me for a time. I am a lonely man, Gregers; I have always felt lonely, all my life through; but most of all now that I am getting up in years. I feel the need of some one about me ——

GREGERS. You have Mrs. Sörby.

WERLE. Yes, I have her; and she has become, I may say, almost indispensable to me. She is lively and even-tempered; she brightens up the house; and that is a very great thing for me.

GREGERS. Well then, you have everything just as you wish it.

WERLE. Yes, but I am afraid it can't last. A woman so situated may easily find herself in a false position, in the eyes of the world. For that matter it does a man no good, either.

GREGERS. Oh, when a man gives such dinners as you give, he can risk a great deal.

WERLE. Yes, but how about the woman, Gregers? I fear she won't accept the situation much longer; and even if she did — even if, out of attachment to me, she were to take her chance of gossip and scandal and all that ——? Do you think, Gregers — you with your strong sense of justice ——

GREGERS [*interrupts him*]. Tell me in one word: are you thinking of marrying her?

WERLE. Suppose I were thinking of it? What then?

GREGERS. That's what I say: what then?

WERLE. Should you be inflexibly opposed to it?

GREGERS. Not at all. Not by any means.

WERLE. I was not sure whether your devotion to your mother's memory ——

GREGERS. I am not overstrained.

WERLE. Well, whatever you may or may not be, at all events you have lifted a great weight from my mind. I am extremely pleased that I can reckon on your concurrence in this matter.

GREGERS [*looking intently at him*]. Now I see the use you want to put me to.

WERLE. Use to put you to? What an expression!

GREGERS. Oh, don't let us be nice in our choice of words — not when we are alone together, at any rate. [*With a short laugh*] Well, well! So this is what made it absolutely essential that I should come to town in person. For the sake of Mrs. Sörby, we are to get up a pretence at family life in the house — a tableau of filial affection! That will be something new indeed.

WERLE. How dare you speak in that tone!

GREGERS. Was there ever any family life here? Never since I can remember. But now, forsooth, your plans demand something of the sort. No doubt it will have an excellent effect when it is reported that the son has hastened home, on the wings of filial piety, to the grey-haired father's wedding-feast. What will then remain of all the rumours as to the wrongs the poor dead mother had to submit to? Not a vestige. Her son annihilates them at one stroke.

WERLE. Gregers — I believe there is no one in the world you detest as you do me.

GREGERS [*softly*]. I have seen you at too close quarters.

WERLE. You have seen me with your mother's eyes. [*Lowers his voice a little*] But you should remember that her eyes were — clouded now and then.

GREGERS [*quivering*]. I see what you are hinting at. But who was to blame for mother's unfortunate weakness? Why you, and all those ——! The last of them was this woman that you palmed off upon Hialmar Ekdal, when you were —— Ugh!

WERLE [*shrugs his shoulders*]. Word for word as if it were your mother speaking!

GREGERS [*without heeding*]. And there he is now, with his great, confiding, childlike mind, compassed about with all this treachery — living under the same roof with such a creature, and never dreaming that what he calls his home is built upon a lie! [*Comes a step nearer*] When I look back upon your past, I seem to see a battle-field with shattered lives on every hand.

WERLE. I begin to think the chasm that divides us is too wide.

GREGERS [*bowing, with self-command*]. So I have observed; and therefore I take my hat and go.

WERLE. You are going! Out of the house?

GREGERS. Yes. For at last I see my mission in life.

WERLE. What mission?

GREGERS. You would only laugh if I told you.

WERLE. A lonely man doesn't laugh so easily, Gregers.

GREGERS [*pointing towards the background*]. Look, father, — the Chamberlains are playing blind-man's-buff with Mrs. Sörby. — Good-night and good-bye.

[*He goes out by the back to the right. Sounds of laughter and merriment from the company, who are now visible in the outer room*]

WERLE [*muttering contemptuously after* GREGERS]. Ha ——! Poor wretch — and he says he is not overstrained!

ACT II

HIALMAR EKDAL'S *studio, a good-sized room, evidently in the top storey of the building. On the right, a sloping roof of large panes of glass, half-covered by a blue curtain. In the right-hand corner, at the back, the entrance door; farther forward, on the same side, a door leading to the sitting-room. Two doors on the opposite side, and between them an iron stove. At the back, a wide double sliding-door. The studio is plainly but comfortably fitted up and furnished. Between the doors on the right, standing out a little from the wall, a sofa with a table and some chairs; on the table a lighted lamp with a shade; beside the stove an old arm-chair. Photographic instruments and apparatus of different kinds lying about the room. Against the back wall, to the left of the double door, stands a bookcase containing a few books, boxes, and bottles of chemicals, instruments, tools, and other objects. Photographs and small articles, such as camel's-hair pencils, paper, and so forth, lie on the table.*

GINA EKDAL *sits on a chair by the table, sewing.* HEDVIG *is sitting on the sofa, with her hands shading her eyes and her thumbs in her ears, reading a book.*

GINA [*glances once or twice at* HEDVIG, *as if with secret anxiety; then says*] Hedvig!

[HEDVIG *does not hear*].

GINA [*repeats more loudly*]. Hedvig!

HEDVIG [*takes away her hands and looks up*]. Yes, mother?

GINA. Hedvig, dear, you mustn't sit reading any longer now.

HEDVIG. Oh mother, mayn't I read a little more? Just a little bit?

GINA. No, no, you must put away your book now. Father doesn't like it; he never reads hisself in the evening.

HEDVIG [*shuts the book*]. No, father doesn't care much about reading.

GINA [*puts aside her sewing and takes up a lead pencil and a little account-book from the table*]. Can you remember how much we paid for the butter to-day?

HEDVIG. It was one crown sixty-five.

GINA. That's right. [*Puts it down*] It's terrible what a lot of butter we get through in this house. Then there was the smoked sausage, and the cheese — let me see — [*Writes*] — and the ham — [*Adds up*] Yes, that makes just ——

HEDVIG. And then the beer.

GINA. Yes, to be sure. [*Writes*] How it do mount up! But we can't manage with no less.

HEDVIG. And then you and I didn't need anything hot for dinner, as father was out.

GINA. No; that was so much to the good. And then I took eight crowns fifty for the photographs.

HEDVIG. Really! So much as that?

GINA. Exactly eight crowns fifty.

[*Silence.* GINA *takes up her sewing again,* HEDVIG *takes paper and pencil and begins to draw, shading her eyes with her left hand*]

HEDVIG. Isn't it jolly to think that father is at Mr. Werle's big dinner-party?

GINA. You know he's not really Mr. Werle's guest. It was the son invited him. [*After a pause*] We have nothing to do with that Mr. Werle.

HEDVIG. I'm longing for father to come home. He promised to ask Mrs. Sörby for something nice for me.

GINA. Yes, there's plenty of good things going in that house, I can tell you.

HEDVIG [*goes on drawing*]. And I believe I'm a little hungry too.

[OLD EKDAL, *with the paper parcel under his arm and another parcel in his coat pocket, comes in by the entrance door*]

GINA. How late you are to-day, grandfather!

EKDAL. They had locked the office door. Had to wait in Gråberg's room. And then they let me through — h'm.

HEDVIG. Did you get some more copying to do, grandfather?

EKDAL. This whole packet. Just look.

GINA. That's capital.

HEDVIG. And you have another parcel in your pocket.

EKDAL. Eh? Oh never mind, that's nothing. [*Puts his stick away in a corner*] This work will keep me going a long time, Gina. [*Opens one of the sliding-doors in the back wall a little*] Hush! [*Peeps into the room for a moment, then pushes the door carefully to again*] Hee-hee! They're fast asleep, all the lot of them. And she's gone into the basket herself. Hee-hee!

HEDVIG. Are you sure she isn't cold in that basket, grandfather?

EKDAL. Not a bit of it! Cold? With all that straw? [*Goes towards the farther door on the left*] There are matches in here, I suppose.

GINA. The matches is on the drawers.

[EKDAL *goes into his room*]

HEDVIG. It's nice that grandfather has got all that copying.

GINA. Yes, poor old father; it means a bit of pocket-money for him.

HEDVIG. And he won't be able to sit the whole forenoon down at that horrid Madam Eriksen's.

GINA. No more he won't.

[*Short silence*]

HEDVIG. Do you suppose they are still at the dinner-table?

GINA. Goodness knows; as like as not.

HEDVIG. Think of all the delicious things father is having to eat! I'm certain he'll be in splendid spirits when he comes. Don't you think so, mother?

GINA. Yes; and if only we could tell him that we'd got the room let ——

HEDVIG. But we don't need that this evening.

GINA. Oh, we'd be none the worse of it, I can tell you. It's no use to us as it is.

HEDVIG. I mean we don't need it this evening, for father will be in a good humour at any rate. It is best to keep the letting of the room for another time.

GINA [*looks across at her*]. You like having some good news to tell father when he comes home in the evening?

HEDVIG. Yes; for then things are pleasanter somehow.

GINA [*thinking to herself*]. Yes, yes, there's something in that.

[OLD EKDAL *comes in again and is going out by the foremost door to the left*]

GINA [*half turning in her chair*]. Do you want something out of the kitchen, grandfather?

EKDAL. Yes, yes, I do. Don't you trouble.

[*Goes out*]

GINA. He's not poking away at the fire, is he? [*Waits a moment*] Hedvig, go and see what he's about.

[EKDAL *comes in again with a small jug of steaming hot water*]

HEDVIG. Have you been getting some hot water, grandfather?

EKDAL. Yes, hot water. Want it for something. Want to write, and the ink has got as thick as porridge — h'm.

GINA. But you'd best have your supper, first, grandfather. It's laid in there.

EKDAL. Can't be bothered with supper, Gina. Very busy, I tell you. No one's to come to my room. No one — h'm.

[*He goes into his room;* GINA *and* HEDVIG *look at each other*]

GINA [*softly*]. Can you imagine where he's got money from?

HEDVIG. From Gråberg, perhaps.

GINA. Not a bit of it. Gråberg always sends the money to me.

HEDVIG. Then he must have got a bottle on credit somewhere.

GINA. Poor grandfather, who'd give him credit?

[HIALMAR EKDAL, *in an overcoat and grey felt hat, comes in from the right*]

GINA [*throws down her sewing and rises*]. Why, Ekdal. Is that you already?

HEDVIG [*at the same time jumping up*]. Fancy your coming so soon, father!

HIALMAR [*taking off his hat*]. Yes, most of the people were coming away.

HEDVIG. So early?

HIALMAR. Yes, it was a dinner-party, you know.

[*Is taking off his overcoat*]

GINA. Let me help you.

HEDVIG. Me too.

[*They draw off his coat;* GINA *hangs it up on the back wall*]

HEDVIG. Were there many people there, father?

HIALMAR. Oh no, not many. We were about twelve or fourteen at table.

GINA. And you had some talk with them all?

HIALMAR. Oh yes, a little; but Gregers took me up most of the time.

GINA. Is Gregers as ugly as ever?

HIALMAR. Well, he's not very much to look at. Hasn't the old man come home?

HEDVIG. Yes, grandfather is in his room, writing.

HIALMAR. Did he say anything?

GINA. No, what should he say?

HIALMAR. Didn't he say anything about ——? I heard something about his having been with Gråberg. I'll go in and see him for a moment.

GINA. No, no, better not.

HIALMAR. Why not? Did he say he didn't want me to go in?

GINA. I don't think he wants to see nobody this evening ——

HEDVIG [*making signs*] H'm — h'm!

GINA [*not noticing*]. —— he has been in to fetch hot water ——

HIALMAR. Aha! Then he's ——

GINA. Yes, I suppose so.

HIALMAR. Oh God! my poor old white-haired father! — Well, well; there let him sit and get all the enjoyment he can.

[OLD EKDAL, *in an indoor coat and with a lighted pipe, comes from his room*]

EKDAL. Got home? Thought it was you I heard talking.

HIALMAR. Yes, I have just come.

EKDAL. You didn't see me, did you?

HIALMAR. No; but they told me you had passed through — so I thought I would follow you.

EKDAL. H'm, good of you, Hialmar. — Who were they, all those fellows?

HIALMAR. Oh, all sorts of people. There was Chamberlain Flor, and Chamberlain Balle, and Chamberlain Kaspersen, and Chamberlain — this, that, and the other — I don't know who all ——

EKDAL [*nodding*]. Hear that, Gina! Chamberlains every one of them!

GINA. Yes, I hear as they're terrible genteel in that house nowadays.

HEDVIG. Did the Chamberlains sing, father? Or did they read aloud?

HIALMAR. No, they only talked nonsense. They wanted me to recite something for them; but I knew better than that.

EKDAL. You weren't to be persuaded, eh?

GINA. Oh, you might have done it.

HIALMAR. No; one mustn't be at everybody's beck and call. [*Walks about the room*] That's not my way, at any rate.

EKDAL. No no; Hialmar's not to be had for the asking, he isn't.

HIALMAR. I don't see why *I* should bother myself to entertain people on the rare occasions when I go into society. Let the others exert themselves. These fellows go from one great dinner-table to the next and gorge and guzzle day out and day in. It's for them to bestir themselves and do something in return for all the good feeding they get.

GINA. But you didn't say that?

HIALMAR [*humming*]. Ho-ho-ho ——; faith, I gave them a bit of my mind.

EKDAL. Not the Chamberlains?

HIALMAR. Oh, why not? [*Lightly*] After that, we had a little discussion about Tokay.

EKDAL. Tokay! There's a fine wine for you!

HIALMAR [*comes to a standstill*]. It may be a fine wine. But of course you know the vintages differ; it all depends on how much sunshine the grapes have had.

GINA. Why, you know everything, Ekdal.

EKDAL. And did they dispute that?

HIALMAR. They tried to; but they were requested to observe that it was just the same with Chamberlains — that with them, too, different batches were of different qualities.

GINA. What things you do think of!

EKDAL. Hee-hee! So they got that in their pipes too?

HIALMAR. Right in their teeth.

EKDAL. Do you hear that, Gina? He said it right in the very teeth of all the Chamberlains.

GINA. Fancy ——! Right in their teeth!

HIALMAR. Yes, but I don't want it talked about. One doesn't speak of such things. The whole affair passed off quite amicably of course. They were nice, genial fellows; I didn't want to wound them — not I!

EKDAL. Right in their teeth, though ——!

HEDVIG [*caressingly*]. How nice it is to see you in a dress-coat! It suits you so well, father.

HIALMAR. Yes, don't you think so? And this one really sits to perfection. It fits almost as if it had been made for me; — a little tight in the arm-holes perhaps; — help me, Hedvig. [*Takes off the coat*] I think I'll put on my jacket. Where is my jacket, Gina?

GINA. Here it is.

[*Brings the jacket and helps him*]

HIALMAR. That's it! Don't forget to send the coat back to Molvik first thing to-morrow morning.

GINA [*laying it away*]. I'll be sure and see to it.

HIALMAR [*stretching himself*]. After all, there's a more homely feeling about this. A free-and-easy indoor costume suits my whole personality better. Don't you think so, Hedvig?

HEDVIG. Yes, father.

HIALMAR. When I loosen my necktie into a pair of flowing ends — like this — eh?

HEDVIG. Yes, that goes so well with your moustache and the sweep of your curls.

HIALMAR. I should not call them curls exactly; I should rather say locks.

HEDVIG. Yes, they are too big for curls.

HIALMAR. Locks describes them better.

HEDVIG [*after a pause, twitching his jacket*]. Father.

HIALMAR. Well, what is it?

HEDVIG. Oh, you know very well.

HIALMAR. No, really I don't ——

HEDVIG [*half laughing, half whimpering*]. Oh yes, father; now don't tease me any longer!

HIALMAR. Why, what do you mean?

HEDVIG [*shaking him*]. Oh what nonsense; come, where are they, father? All the good things you promised me, you know?

HIALMAR. Oh — if I haven't forgotten all about them!

HEDVIG. Now you're only teasing me, father! Oh, it's too bad of you! Where have you put them?

HIALMAR. No, I positively forgot to get anything. But wait a little! I have something else for you, Hedvig.

[*Goes and searches in the pockets of the coat*]

HEDVIG [*skipping and clapping her hands*]. Oh mother, mother!

GINA. There, you see; if you only give him time ——

HIALMAR [*with a paper*]. Look, here it is.

HEDVIG. That? Why, that's only a paper.

HIALMAR. That is the bill of fare, my dear; the whole bill of fare. Here you see: "Menu" — that means bill of fare.

HEDVIG. Haven't you anything else?

HIALMAR. I forgot the other things, I tell you. But you may take my word for it, these dainties are very unsatisfying. Sit down at the table and read the bill of fare, and then I'll describe to you how the dishes taste. Here you are, Hedvig.

HEDVIG [*gulping down her tears*]. Thank you.

[*She seats herself, but does not read;* GINA *makes signs to her;* HIALMAR *notices it*]

HIALMAR [*pacing up and down the room*]. It's monstrous what absurd things the father of a family is expected to think of; and if he forgets the smallest trifle, he is treated to sour faces at once. Well, well, one gets used to that too. [*Stops near the stove, by the old man's chair*] Have you peeped in there this evening, father?

EKDAL. Yes, to be sure I have. She's gone into the basket.

HIALMAR. Ah, she has gone into the basket. Then she's beginning to get used to it.

EKDAL. Yes; just as I prophesied. But you know there are still a few little things ——

HIALMAR. A few improvements, yes.

EKDAL. They've got to be made, you know.

HIALMAR. Yes, let us have a talk about the improvements, father. Come, let us sit on the sofa.

EKDAL. All right. H'm — think I'll just fill my pipe first. Must clean it out, too. H'm.

[*He goes into his room*]

GINA [*smiling to* HIALMAR]. His pipe!

HIALMAR. Oh yes, yes, Gina; let him alone — the poor shipwrecked old man. — Yes, these improvements — we had better get them out of hand tomorrow.

GINA. You'll hardly have time tomorrow, Ekdal.

HEDVIG [*interposing*]. Oh yes he will, mother!

GINA. —— for remember them prints that has to be retouched; they've sent for them time after time.

HIALMAR. There now! those prints again! I shall get them finished all right! Have any new orders come in?

GINA. No, worse luck; to-morrow I have nothing but those two sittings, you know.

HIALMAR. Nothing else? Oh no, if people won't set about things with a will ——

GINA. But what more can I do? Don't I advertise in the papers as much as we can afford?

HIALMAR. Yes, the papers, the papers; you see how much good they do. And I suppose no one has been to look at the room either?

GINA. No, not yet.

HIALMAR. That was only to be expected. If people won't keep their eyes open ——. Nothing can be done without a real effort, Gina!

HEDVIG [*going towards him*]. Shall I fetch you the flute, father?

HIALMAR. No; no flute for me; *I* want no pleasures in this world. [*Pacing about*] Yes, indeed I will work to-morrow; you shall see if I don't. You may be sure I shall work as long as my strength holds out.

GINA. But my dear good Ekdal, I didn't mean it in that way.

HEDVIG. Father, mayn't I bring in a bottle of beer?

HIALMAR. No, certainly not. I require nothing, nothing —— [*Comes to a standstill*] Beer? Was it beer you were talking about?

HEDVIG [*cheerfully*]. Yes, father; beautiful fresh beer.

HIALMAR. Well — since you insist upon it, you may bring in a bottle.

GINA. Yes, do; and we'll be nice and cosy.

[HEDVIG *runs towards the kitchen door*]

HIALMAR [*by the stove, stops her, looks at her, puts his arm round her neck and presses her to him*]. Hedvig, Hedvig!

HEDVIG [*with tears of joy*]. My dear, kind father!

HIALMAR. No, don't call me that. Here have I been feasting at the rich man's table, — battening at the groaning board ——! And I couldn't even ——!

GINA [*sitting at the table*]. Oh nonsense, nonsense, Ekdal.

HIALMAR. It's not nonsense! And yet you mustn't be too hard upon me. You know that I love you for all that.

HEDVIG [*throwing her arms round him*]. And we love you, oh so dearly, father!

HIALMAR. And if I am unreasonable once in a while, — why then — you must remember that I am a man beset by a host of cares. There, there! [*Dries his eyes*] No beer at such a moment as this. Give me the flute.

[HEDVIG *runs to the bookcase and fetches it*]

HIALMAR. Thanks! That's right. With my flute in my hand and you two at my side — ah ——!

[HEDVIG *seats herself at the table near* GINA; HIALMAR *paces backwards and forwards, pipes up vigorously, and plays a Bohemian peasant dance, but in a slow, plaintive tempo, and with sentimental expression*]

HIALMAR [*breaking off the melody, holds out his left hand to* GINA, *and says with emotion*] Our roof may be poor and humble, Gina; but it is home. And with all my heart I say: here dwells my happiness.

[*He begins to play again; almost immediately after, a knocking is heard at the entrance door*]

GINA [*rising*]. Hush, Ekdal, — I think there's some one at the door.

HIALMAR [*laying the flute on the bookcase*]. There! Again!

[GINA *goes and opens the door*]

GREGERS WERLE [*in the passage*]. Excuse me ——

GINA [*starting back slightly*]. Oh!

GREGERS. —— does not Mr. Ekdal, the photographer, live here?

GINA. Yes, he does.

HIALMAR [*going towards the door*]. Gregers! You here after all? Well, come in then.

GREGERS [*coming in*]. I told you I would come and look you up.

HIALMAR. But this evening ——? Have you left the party?

GREGERS. I have left both the party and my father's house. — Good evening, Mrs. Ekdal. I don't know whether you recognise me?

GINA. Oh yes; it's not difficult to know young Mr. Werle again.

GREGERS. No, I am like my mother; and no doubt you remember her.

HIALMAR. Left your father's house, did you say?

GREGERS. Yes, I have gone to a hotel.

HIALMAR. Indeed. Well, since you're here, take off your coat and sit down.

GREGERS. Thanks.

[*He takes off his overcoat. He is now dressed in a plain grey suit of a countrified cut*]

HIALMAR. Here, on the sofa. Make yourself comfortable.

[GREGERS *seats himself on the sofa;* HIALMAR *takes a chair at the table*]

GREGERS [*looking around him*]. So these are your quarters, Hialmar — this is your home.

HIALMAR. This is the studio, as you see ——

GINA. But it's the largest of our rooms, so we generally sit here.

HIALMAR. We used to live in a better place; but this flat has one great advantage: there are such capital outer rooms ——

GINA. And we have a room on the

other side of the passage that we can let.

GREGERS [*to* HIALMAR]. Ah — so you have lodgers too?

HIALMAR. No, not yet. They're not so easy to find, you see; you have to keep your eyes open. [*To* HEDVIG] What about that beer, eh?

[HEDVIG *nods and goes out into the kitchen*]

GREGERS. So that is your daughter?

HIALMAR. Yes, that is Hedvig.

GREGERS. And she is your only child?

HIALMAR. Yes, the only one. She is the joy of our lives, and — [*lowering his voice*] — at the same time our deepest sorrow, Gregers.

GREGERS. What do you mean?

HIALMAR. She is in serious danger of losing her eyesight.

GREGERS. Becoming blind?

HIALMAR. Yes. Only the first symptoms have appeared as yet, and she may not feel it much for some time. But the doctor has warned us. It is coming, inexorably.

GREGERS. What a terrible misfortune! How do you account for it?

HIALMAR [*sighs*]. Hereditary, no doubt.

GREGERS [*starting*]. Hereditary?

GINA. Ekdal's mother had weak eyes.

HIALMAR. Yes, so my father says; I can't remember her.

GREGERS. Poor child! And how does she take it?

HIALMAR. Oh, you can imagine we haven't the heart to tell her of it. She dreams of no danger. Gay and careless and chirping like a little bird, she flutters onward into a life of endless night. [*Overcome*] Oh, it is cruelly hard on me, Gregers.

[HEDVIG *brings a tray with beer and glasses, which she sets upon the table*]

HIALMAR [*stroking her hair*]. Thanks, thanks, Hedvig.

[HEDVIG *puts her arm round his neck and whispers in his ear*]

HIALMAR. No, no bread and butter just now. [*Looks up*] But perhaps you would like some, Gregers.

GREGERS [*with a gesture of refusal*]. No, no thank you.

HIALMAR [*still melancholy*]. Well, you can bring in a little all the same. If you have a crust, that is all I want. And plenty of butter on it, mind.

[HEDVIG *nods gaily and goes out into the kitchen again*]

GREGERS [*who has been following her with his eyes*]. She seems quite strong and healthy otherwise.

GINA. Yes. In other ways there's nothing amiss with her, thank goodness.

GREGERS. She promises to be very like you, Mrs. Ekdal. How old is she now?

GINA. Hedvig is close on fourteen; her birthday is the day after to-morrow.

GREGERS. She is pretty tall for her age, then.

GINA. Yes, she's shot up wonderful this last year.

GREGERS. It makes one realise one's own age to see these young people growing up. — How long is it now since you were married?

GINA. We've been married — let me see — just on fifteen years.

GREGERS. Is it so long as that?

GINA [*becomes attentive; looks at him*]. Yes, it is indeed.

HIALMAR. Yes, so it is. Fifteen years all but a few months. [*Changing his tone*] They must have been long years for you, up at the works, Gregers.

GREGERS. They seemed long while I was living them; now they are over, I hardly know how the time has gone.

[OLD EKDAL *comes from his room without his pipe, but with his old-fashioned uniform cap on his head; his gait is somewhat unsteady*]

EKDAL. Come now, Hialmar, let's sit down and have a good talk about this — h'm — what was it again?

HIALMAR [*going towards him*]. Father, we have a visitor here — Gregers Werle. — I don't know if you remember him.

EKDAL [*looking at* GREGERS, *who has risen*]. Werle? Is that the son? What does he want with me?

HIALMAR. Nothing; it's me he has come to see.

EKDAL. Oh! Then there's nothing wrong?

HIALMAR. No, no, of course not.

EKDAL [*with a large gesture*]. Not that I'm afraid, you know; but ——

GREGERS [*goes over to him*]. I bring you a greeting from your old hunting-grounds, Lieutenant Ekdal.

EKDAL. Hunting-grounds?

GREGERS. Yes, up in Höidal, about the works, you know.

EKDAL. Oh, up there. Yes, I knew all those places well in the old days.

GREGERS. You were a great sportsman then.

EKDAL. So I was, I don't deny it. You're looking at my uniform cap. I don't ask anybody's leave to wear it in the house. So long as I don't go out in the streets with it ——

[HEDVIG *brings a plate of bread and butter, which she puts upon the table*]

HIALMAR. Sit down, father, and have a glass of beer. Help yourself, Gregers.

[EKDAL *mutters and stumbles over to the sofa.* GREGERS *seats himself on the chair nearest to him,* HIALMAR *on the other side of* GREGERS. GINA *sits a little way from the table, sewing;* HEDVIG *stands beside her father*]

GREGERS. Can you remember, Lieutenant Ekdal, how Hialmar and I used to come up and visit you in the summer and at Christmas?

EKDAL. Did you? No, no, no; I don't remember it. But sure enough I've been a tidy bit of a sportsman in my day. I've shot bears too. I've shot nine of 'em, no less.

GREGERS [*looking sympathetically at him*]. And now you never get any shooting?

EKDAL. Can't just say that, sir. Get a shot now and then perhaps. Of course not in the old way. For the woods you see — the woods, the woods ——! [*Drinks*] Are the woods fine up there now?

GREGERS. Not so fine as in your time. They have been thinned a good deal.

EKDAL. Thinned? [*More softly, and as if afraid*] It's dangerous work that. Bad things come of it. The woods revenge themselves.

HIALMAR [*filling up his glass*]. Come — a little more, father.

GREGERS. How can a man like you — such a man for the open air — live in the midst of a stuffy town, boxed within four walls?

EKDAL [*laughs quietly and glances at* HIALMAR]. Oh, it's not so bad here. Not at all so bad.

GREGERS. But don't you miss all the things that used to be a part of your very being — the cool sweeping breezes, the free life in the woods and on the uplands, among beasts and birds ——?

EKDAL [*smiling*]. Hialmar, shall we let him see it?

HIALMAR [*hastily and a little embarrassed*]. Oh no no, father; not this evening.

GREGERS. What does he want to show me?

HIALMAR. Oh, it's only something — you can see it another time.

GREGERS [*continues, to the old man*]. You see I have been thinking, Lieutenant Ekdal, that you should come up with me to the works; I am sure to be going back soon. No doubt you could get some copying there too. And here, you have nothing on earth to interest you — nothing to liven you up.

EKDAL [*stares in astonishment at him.*] Have *I* nothing on earth to ——!

GREGERS. Of course you have Hialmar; but then he has his own family. And a man like you, who has always had such a passion for what is free and wild ——

EKDAL [*thumps the table*]. Hialmar, he shall see it!

HIALMAR. Oh, do you think it's worth while, father? It's all dark.

EKDAL. Nonsense; it's moonlight. [*Rises*] He shall see it, I tell you. Let me pass! Come and help me, Hialmar.

HEDVIG. Oh yes, do, father!

HIALMAR [*rising*]. Very well, then.

GREGERS [*to* GINA]. What is it?

GINA. Oh, nothing so very wonderful, after all.

[EKDAL *and* HIALMAR *have gone to the back wall and are each pushing back a side of the sliding door;* HEDVIG *helps the old man;* GREGERS *remains standing by the sofa;* GINA *sits still and sews. Through the open doorway a large, deep, irregular garret is seen with odd nooks and corners; a couple of stovepipes running through it, from rooms below. There are skylights through which clear moonbeams shine in on some parts of the great room; others lie in deep shadow*]

EKDAL [*to* GREGERS]. You may come close up if you like.

GREGERS [*going over to them*]. Why, what is it?

EKDAL. Look for yourself. H'm.

HIALMAR [*somewhat embarrassed*]. This belongs to father, you understand.

GREGERS [*at the door, looks into the garret*]. Why, you keep poultry, Lieutenant Ekdal.

EKDAL. Should think we did keep poultry. They've gone to roost now. But you should just see our fowls by daylight, sir!

HEDVIG. And there's a ——

EKDAL. Sh — sh! don't say anything about it yet.

GREGERS. And you have pigeons too, I see.

EKDAL. Oh yes, haven't we just got pigeons! They have their nest-boxes up there under the roof-tree; for pigeons like to roost high, you see.

HIALMAR. They aren't all common pigeons.

EKDAL. Common! Should think not indeed! We have tumblers, and a pair of pouters, too. But come here! Can you see that hutch down there by the wall?

GREGERS. Yes; what do you use it for?

EKDAL. That's where the rabbits sleep, sir.

GREGERS. Dear me; so you have rabbits too?

EKDAL. Yes, you may take my word for it, we have rabbits! He wants to know if we have rabbits, Hialmar! H'm! But now comes the thing, let me tell you! Here we have it! Move away, Hedvig. Stand here; that's right, — and now look down there. — Don't you see a basket with straw in it?

GREGERS. Yes. And I can see a fowl lying in the basket.

EKDAL. H'm — "a fowl" ——

GREGERS. Isn't it a duck?

EKDAL [*hurt*]. Why, of course it's a duck.

HIALMAR. But what kind of duck, do you think?

HEDVIG. It's not just a common duck ——

EKDAL. Sh!

GREGERS. And it's not a Muscovy duck either.

EKDAL. No, Mr. — Werle; it's not a Muscovy duck; for it's a wild duck!

GREGERS. Is it really? A wild duck?

EKDAL. Yes, that's what it is. That "fowl" as you call it — is the wild duck. It's our wild duck, sir.

HEDVIG. My wild duck. It belongs to me.

GREGERS. And can it live up here in the garret? Does it thrive?

EKDAL. Of course it has a trough of water to splash about in, you know.

HIALMAR. Fresh water every other day.

GINA [*turning towards* HIALMAR]. But my dear Ekdal, it's getting icy cold here.

EKDAL. H'm, we had better shut up then. It's as well not to disturb their night's rest, too. Close up, Hedvig.

[HIALMAR *and* HEDVIG *push the garret doors together*]

EKDAL. Another time you shall see her properly. [*Seats himself in the arm-chair by the stove*] Oh, they're curious things, these wild ducks, I can tell you.

GREGERS. How did you manage to catch it, Lieutenant Ekdal?

EKDAL. *I* didn't catch it. There's a certain man in this town whom we have to thank for it.

GREGERS [*starts slightly*]. That man was not my father, was he?

EKDAL. You've hit it. Your father and no one else. H'm.

HIALMAR. Strange that you should guess that, Gregers.

GREGERS. You were telling me that you owed so many things to my father; and so I thought perhaps ——

GINA. But we didn't get the duck from Mr. Werle himself ——

EKDAL. It's Håkon Werle we have to thank for her, all the same, Gina. [*To* GREGERS] He was shooting from a boat, you see, and he brought her down. But your father's sight is not very good now. H'm; she was only wounded.

GREGERS. Ah! She got a couple of slugs in her body, I suppose.

HIALMAR. Yes, two or three.

HEDVIG. She was hit under the wing, so that she couldn't fly.

GREGERS. And I suppose she dived to the bottom, eh?

EKDAL [*sleepily, in a thick voice*]. Of course. Always do that, wild ducks do. They shoot to the bottom as deep as they can get, sir — and bite themselves fast in the tangle and seaweed — and all the devil's own mess that grows down there. And they never come up again.

GREGERS. But your wild duck came up again, Lieutenant Ekdal.

EKDAL. He had such an amazingly clever dog, your father had. And that dog — he dived in after the duck and fetched her up again.

GREGERS [*who has turned to* HIALMAR]. And then she was sent to you here?

HIALMAR. Not at once; at first your father took her home. But she wouldn't thrive there; so Pettersen was told to put an end to her ——

EKDAL [*half asleep*]. H'm — yes — Pettersen — that ass ——

HIALMAR [*speaking more softly*]. That was how we got her, you see; for father knows Pettersen a little; and when he heard about the wild duck he got him to hand her over to us.

GREGERS. And now she thrives as well as possible in the garret there?

HIALMAR. Yes, wonderfully well. She has got fat. You see, she has lived in there so long now that she has forgotten her natural wild life; and it all depends on that.

GREGERS. You are right there, Hialmar. Be sure you never let her get a glimpse of the sky and the sea ——. But I mustn't stay any longer; I think your father is asleep.

HIALMAR. Oh, as for that ——

GREGERS. But, by-the-bye — you said you had a room to let — a spare room?

HIALMAR. Yes; what then? Do you know of anybody ——?

GREGERS. Can *I* have that room?

HIALMAR. You?

GINA. Oh no, Mr. Werle, you ——

GREGERS. May I have the room? If so, I'll take possession first thing to-morrow morning.

HIALMAR. Yes, with the greatest pleasure ——

GINA. But, Mr. Werle, I'm sure it's not at all the sort of room for you.

HIALMAR. Why, Gina! how can you say that?

GINA. Why, because the room's neither large enough nor light enough, and ——

GREGERS. That really doesn't matter, Mrs. Ekdal.

HIALMAR. I call it quite a nice room, and not at all badly furnished either.

GINA. But remember the pair of them underneath.

GREGERS. What pair?

GINA. Well, there's one as has been a tutor ——

HIALMAR. That's Molvik — Mr. Molvik, B.A.

GINA. And then there's a doctor, by the name of Relling.

GREGERS. Relling? I know him a little; he practised for a time up in Höidal.

GINA. They're a regular rackety pair, they are. As often as not, they're out on the loose in the evenings; and then they come home at all hours, and they're not always just ——

GREGERS. One soon gets used to that sort of thing. I daresay I shall be like the wild duck ——

GINA. H'm; I think you ought to sleep upon it first, anyway.

GREGERS. You seem very unwilling to have me in the house, Mrs. Ekdal.

GINA. Oh no! What makes you think that?

HIALMAR. Well, you really behave strangely about it, Gina. [*To* GREGERS] Then I suppose you intend to remain in the town for the present?

GREGERS [*putting on his overcoat*]. Yes, now I intend to remain here.

HIALMAR. And yet not at your father's? What do you propose to do, then?

GREGERS. Ah, if I only knew that, Hialmar, I shouldn't be so badly off! But when one has the misfortune to be called Gregers —! "Gregers" — and then "Werle" after it; did you ever hear anything so hideous?

HIALMAR. Oh, I don't think so at all.

GREGERS. Ugh! Bah! I feel I should like to spit upon the fellow that answers to such a name. But when a man is once for all doomed to be Gregers — Werle in this world, as I am ——

HIALMAR [*laughs*]. Ha, ha! If you weren't Gregers Werle, what would you like to be?

GREGERS. If I could choose, I should like best to be a clever dog.

GINA. A dog!

HEDVIG [*involuntarily*]. Oh no!

GREGERS. Yes, an amazingly clever dog; one that goes to the bottom after wild ducks when they dive and bite themselves fast in tangle and sea-weed, down among the ooze.

HIALMAR. Upon my word now, Gregers — I don't in the least know what you're driving at.

GREGERS. Oh well, you might not be much the wiser if you did. It's understood, then, that I move in early to-morrow morning. [*To* GINA] I won't give you any trouble; I do everything for myself. [*To* HIALMAR] We can talk about the rest to-morrow. — Good-night, Mrs. Ekdal. [*Nods to* HEDVIG] Good-night.

GINA. Good-night, Mr. Werle.

HEDVIG. Good-night.

HIALMAR [*who has lighted a candle*]. Wait a moment; I must show you a light; the stairs are sure to be dark.

[GREGERS *and* HIALMAR *go out by the passage door*]

GINA [*looking straight before her, with her sewing in her lap*]. Wasn't that queer-like talk about wanting to be a dog?

HEDVIG. Do you know, mother — I believe he meant something quite different by that.

GINA. Why, what should he mean?

HEDVIG. Oh, I don't know; but it seemed to me he meant something different from what he said — all the time.

GINA. Do you think so? Yes, it was sort of queer.

HIALMAR [*comes back*]. The lamp was still burning. [*Puts out the candle and sets it down*] Ah, now one can get a mouthful of food at last. [*Begins to eat the bread and butter*] Well, you see, Gina — if only you keep your eyes open ——

GINA. How, keep your eyes open ——?

HIALMAR. Why, haven't we at last had the luck to get the room let? And just think — to a person like Gregers — a good old friend.

GINA. Well, I don't know what to say about it.

HEDVIG. Oh mother, you'll see; it'll be such fun!

HIALMAR. You're very strange. You were so bent upon getting the room let before; and now you don't like it.

GINA. Yes I do, Ekdal; if it had only been to some one else —— But what do you suppose Mr. Werle will say?

HIALMAR. Old Werle? It doesn't concern him.

GINA. But surely you can see that there's something amiss between them again, or the young man wouldn't be leaving home. You know very well those two can't get on with each other.

HIALMAR. Very likely not, but ——

GINA. And now Mr. Werle may fancy it's you that has egged him on ——

HIALMAR. Let him fancy so, then! Mr. Werle has done a great deal for me; far be it from me to deny it. But that doesn't make me everlastingly dependent upon him.

GINA. But, my dear Ekdal, maybe grandfather 'll suffer for it. He may lose the little bit of work he gets from Gråberg.

HIALMAR. I could almost say: so much the better! Is it not humiliating for a man like me to see his grey-haired father treated as a pariah? But now I believe the fulness of time is at hand. [*Takes a fresh piece of bread and butter*] An sure as I have a mission in life, I mean to fulfil it now!

HEDVIG. Oh yes, father, do!

GINA. Hush! Don't wake him!

HIALMAR [*more softly*]. I will fulfil it, I say. The day shall come when —— And that is why I say it's a good thing we have let the room; for that makes me more independent. The man who has a mission in life must be independent. [*By the arm-chair, with emotion*] Poor old white-haired father! Rely on your Hialmar. He has broad shoulders — strong shoulders, at any rate. You shall yet wake up some fine day and —— [*To* GINA] Do you not believe it?

GINA [*rising*]. Yes, of course I do; but in the meantime suppose we see about getting him to bed.

HIALMAR. Yes, come.

[*They take hold of the old man carefully*]

ACT III

HIALMAR EKDAL'S *studio. It is morning: the daylight shines through the large window in the slanting roof; the curtain is drawn back.*

HIALMAR *is sitting at the table, busy retouching a photograph; several others lie before him. Presently* GINA, *wearing her hat and cloak, enters by the passage door; she has a covered basket on her arm.*

HIALMAR. Back already, Gina?

GINA. Oh yes, one can't let the grass grow under one's feet.

[*Sets her basket on a chair, and takes off her things*]

HIALMAR. Did you look in at Gregers' room?

GINA. Yes, that I did. It's a rare sight, I can tell you; he's made a pretty mess to start off with.

HIALMAR. How so?

GINA. He was determined to do everything for himself, he said; so he sets to work to light the stove, and what must he do but screw down the damper till the whole room is full of smoke. Ugh! There was a smell fit to ——

HIALMAR. Well, really!

GINA. But that's not the worst of

it; for then he thinks he'll put out the fire, and goes and empties his water-jug into the stove, and so makes the whole floor one filthy puddle.

HIALMAR. How annoying!

GINA. I've got the porter's wife to clear up after him, pig that he is! But the room won't be fit to live in till the afternoon.

HIALMAR. What's he doing with himself in the meantime?

GINA. He said he was going out for a little while.

HIALMAR. I looked in upon him, too, for a moment — after you had gone.

GINA. So I heard. You've asked him to lunch.

HIALMAR. Just to a little bit of early lunch, you know. It's his first day — we can hardly do less. You've got something in the house, I suppose?

GINA. I shall have to find something or other.

HIALMAR. And don't cut it too fine, for I fancy Relling and Molvik are coming up too. I just happened to meet Relling on the stairs, you see; so I had to ——

GINA. Oh, are we to have those two as well?

HIALMAR. Good Lord — a couple more or less can't make any difference.

OLD EKDAL [*opens his door and looks in*]. I say, Hialmar —— [*Sees* GINA] Oh!

GINA. Do you want anything, grandfather?

EKDAL. Oh no, it doesn't matter. H'm!

[*Retires again*]

GINA [*takes up the basket*]. Be sure you see that he doesn't go out.

HIALMAR. All right, all right. And, Gina, a little herring-salad wouldn't be a bad idea; Relling and Molvik were out on the loose again last night.

GINA. If only they don't come before I'm ready for them ——

HIALMAR. No, of course they won't; take your own time.

GINA. Very well; and meanwhile you can be working a bit.

HIALMAR. Well, I am working! I am working as hard as I can!

GINA. Then you'll have that job off your hands, you see.

[*She goes out to the kitchen with her basket.* HIALMAR *sits for a time pencilling away at the photograph, in an indolent and listless manner*]

EKDAL [*peeps in, looks round the studio, and says softly*]. Are you busy?

HIALMAR. Yes, I'm toiling at these wretched pictures ——

EKDAL. Well well, never mind, — since you're so busy — h'm!

[*He goes out again; the door stands open*]

HIALMAR [*continues for some time in silence; then he lays down his brush and goes over to the door*]. Are you busy, father?

EKDAL [*in a grumbling tone, within*]. If you're busy, I'm busy too. H'm!

HIALMAR. Oh, very well, then.

[*Goes to his work again*]

EKDAL [*presently, coming to the door again*]. H'm; I say, Hialmar, I'm not so very busy, you know.

HIALMAR. I thought you were writing.

EKDAL. Oh, devil take it! can't Gråberg wait a day or two? After all, it's not a matter of life and death.

HIALMAR. No; and you're not his slave either.

EKDAL. And about that other business in there ——

HIALMAR. Just what I was thinking of. Do you want to go in? Shall I open the door for you?

EKDAL. Well, it wouldn't be a bad notion.

HIALMAR [*rises*]. Then we'd have that off our hands.

EKDAL. Yes, exactly. It's got to be ready first thing to-morrow. It is to-morrow, isn't it? H'm?

HIALMAR. Yes, of course it's to-morrow.

[HIALMAR *and* EKDAL *push aside each his half of the sliding door. The morning sun is shining in through the skylights; some doves are flying about; others sit cooing, upon the perches; the hens are heard clucking now and then, further back in the garret*]

HIALMAR. There; now you can get to work, father.

EKDAL [*goes in*]. Aren't you coming too?

HIALMAR. Well really, do you know ——; I almost think —— [*Sees* GINA *at the kitchen door*] I? No; I haven't time; I must work. — But now for our new contrivance ——

[*He pulls a cord, a curtain slips down inside, the lower part consisting of a piece of old sail-cloth,*

the upper part of a stretched fishing net. The floor of the garret is thus no longer visible]

HIALMAR [*goes to the table*]. So! Now, perhaps I can sit in peace for a little while.

GINA. Is he rampaging in there again?

HIALMAR. Would you rather have had him slip down to Madam Eriksen's? [*Seats himself*] Do you want anything? You know you said ——

GINA. I only wanted to ask if you think we can lay the table for lunch here?

HIALMAR. Yes; we have no early appointment, I suppose?

GINA. No, I expect no one to-day except those two sweethearts that are to be taken together.

HIALMAR. Why the deuce couldn't they be taken together another day!

GINA. Don't you know, I told them to come in the afternoon, when you are having your nap.

HIALMAR. Oh, that's capital. Very well, let us have lunch here then.

GINA. All right; but there's no hurry about laying the cloth; you can have the table for a good while yet.

HIALMAR. Do you think I am not sticking at my work? I'm at it as hard as I can!

GINA. Then you'll be free later on, you know.

[*Goes out into the kitchen again. Short pause*]

EKDAL [*in the garret doorway, behind the net*]. Hialmar!

HIALMAR. Well?

EKDAL. Afraid we shall have to move the water-trough, after all.

HIALMAR. What else have I been saying all along?

EKDAL. H'm — h'm — h'm.

[*Goes away from the door again*]

[HIALMAR *goes on working a little; glances towards the garret and half rises.* HEDVIG *comes in from the kitchen*]

HIALMAR [*sits down again hurriedly*]. What do you want?

HEDVIG. I only wanted to come in beside you, father.

HIALMAR [*after a pause*]. What makes you go prying around like that? Perhaps you are told off to watch me?

HEDVIG. No, no.

HIALMAR. What is your mother doing out there?

HEDVIG. Oh, mother's in the middle of making the herring-salad. [*Goes to the table*] Isn't there any little thing I could help you with, father?

HIALMAR. Oh no. It is right that I should bear the whole burden — so long as my strength holds out. Set your mind at rest, Hedvig; if only your father keeps his health ——

HEDVIG. Oh no, father! You mustn't talk in that horrid way.

[*She wanders about a little, stops by the doorway and looks into the garret*]

HIALMAR. Tell me, what is he doing?

HEDVIG. I think he's making a new path to the water-trough.

HIALMAR. He can never manage that by himself! And here am I doomed to sit ——!

HEDVIG [*goes to him*]. Let me take the brush, father; I can do it, quite well.

HIALMAR. Oh nonsense; you will only hurt your eyes.

HEDVIG. Not a bit. Give me the brush.

HIALMAR [*rising*]. Well, it wont take more than a minute or two.

HEDVIG. Pooh, what harm can it do then? [*Takes the brush*] There! [*Seats herself*] I can begin upon this one.

HIALMAR. But mind you don't hurt your eyes! Do you hear? *I* won't be answerable; you do it on your own responsibility — understand that.

HEDVIG [*retouching*]. Yes, yes, I understand.

HIALMAR. You are quite clever at it, Hedvig. Only a minute or two, you know.

[*He slips through by the edge of the curtain into the garret.* HEDVIG *sits at her work.* HIALMAR *and* EKDAL *are heard disputing inside*]

HIALMAR [*appears behind the net*]. I say, Hedvig — give me those pincers that are lying on the shelf. And the chisel. [*Turns away inside*] Now you shall see, father. Just let me show you first what I mean!

[HEDVIG *has fetched the required tools from the shelf, and hands them to him through the net*]

HIALMAR. Ah, thanks. I didn't come a moment too soon.

[*Goes back from the curtain again; they are heard carpentering and*

talking inside. HEDVIG *stands looking in at them. A moment later there is a knock at the passage door; she does not notice it*]

GREGERS WERLE [*bareheaded, in indoor dress, enters and stops near the door*]. H'm ——!

HEDVIG [*turns and goes towards him*]. Good morning. Please come in.

GREGERS. Thank you. [*Looking towards the garret*] You seem to have workpeople in the house.

HEDVIG. No, it is only father and grandfather. I'll tell them you are here.

GREGERS. No no, don't do that; I would rather wait a little.

[*Seats himself on the sofa*]

HEDVIG. It looks so untidy here ——

[*Begins to clear away the photographs*]

GREGERS. Oh, don't take them away. Are those prints that have to be finished off?

HEDVIG. Yes, they are a few I was helping father with.

GREGERS. Please don't let me disturb you.

HEDVIG. Oh no.

[*She gathers the things to her and sits down to work;* GREGERS *looks at her, meanwhile, in silence*]

GREGERS. Did the wild duck sleep well last night?

HEDVIG. Yes, I think so, thanks.

GREGERS [*turning towards the garret*]. It looks quite different by day from what it did last night in the moonlight.

HEDVIG. Yes, it changes ever so much. It looks different in the morning and in the afternoon; and it's different on rainy days from what it is in fine weather.

GREGERS. Have you noticed that?

HEDVIG. Yes, how could I help it?

GREGERS. Are you, too, fond of being in there with the wild duck?

HEDVIG. Yes, when I can manage it ——

GREGERS. But I suppose you haven't much spare time; you go to school, no doubt.

HEDVIG. No, not now; father is afraid of my hurting my eyes.

GREGERS. Oh; then he reads with you himself?

HEDVIG. Father has promised to read with me; but he has never had time yet.

GREGERS. Then is there nobody else to give you a little help?

HEDVIG. Yes, there is Mr. Molvik; but he is not always exactly — quite ——

GREGERS. Sober?

HEDVIG. Yes, I suppose that's it!

GREGERS. Why, then you must have any amount of time on your hands. And in there I suppose it is a sort of world by itself?

HEDVIG. Oh yes, quite. And there are such lots of wonderful things.

GREGERS. Indeed?

HEDVIG. Yes, there are big cupboards full of books; and a great many of the books have pictures in them.

GREGERS. Aha!

HEDVIG. And there's an old bureau with drawers and flaps, and a big clock with figures that go out and in. But the clock isn't going now.

GREGERS. So time has come to a standstill in there — in the wild duck's domain.

HEDVIG. Yes. And then there's an old paint-box and things of that sort; and all the books.

GREGERS. And you read the books, I suppose?

HEDVIG. Oh yes, when I get the chance. Most of them are English though, and I don't understand English. But then I look at the pictures. — There is one great big book called "Harrison's History of London."[1] It must be a hundred years old; and there are such heaps of pictures in it. At the beginning there is Death with an hour-glass and a woman. I think that is horrid. But then there are all the other pictures of churches, and castles, and streets, and great ships sailing on the sea.

GREGERS. But tell me, where did all those wonderful things come from?

HEDVIG. Oh, an old sea captain once lived here, and he brought them home with him. They used to call him "The Flying Dutchman." That was curious, because he wasn't a Dutchman at all.

GREGERS. Was he not?

HEDVIG. No. But at last he was drowned at sea; and so he left all those things behind him.

GREGERS. Tell me now — when you are sitting in there looking at the pic-

[1] *A New and Universal History of the Cities of London and Westminster*, by Walter Harrison. London, 1775, folio.

tures, don't you wish you could travel and see the real world for yourself?

HEDVIG. Oh no! I mean always to stay at home and help father and mother.

GREGERS. To retouch photographs?

HEDVIG. No, not only that. I should love above everything to learn to engrave pictures like those in the English books.

GREGERS. H'm. What does your father say to that?

HEDVIG. I don't think father likes it; father is strange about such things. Only think, he talks of my learning basket-making, and straw-plaiting! But I don't think that would be much good.

GREGERS. Oh no, I don't think so either.

HEDVIG. But father was right in saying that if I had learnt basket-making I could have made the new basket for the wild duck.

GREGERS. So you could; and it was you that ought to have done it, wasn't it?

HEDVIG. Yes, for it's my wild duck.

GREGERS. Of course it is.

HEDVIG. Yes, it belongs to me. But I lend it to father and grandfather as often as they please.

GREGERS. Indeed? What do they do with it?

HEDVIG. Oh, they look after it, and build places for it, and so on.

GREGERS. I see; for no doubt the wild duck is by far the most distinguished inhabitant of the garret?

HEDVIG. Yes, indeed she is; for she is a real wild fowl, you know. And then she is so much to be pitied; she has no one to care for, poor thing.

GREGERS. She has no family, as the rabbits have ——

HEDVIG. No. The hens, too, many of them, were chickens together; but she has been taken right away from all her friends. And then there is so much that is strange about the wild duck. Nobody knows her, and nobody knows where she came from either.

GREGERS. And she has been down in the depths of the sea.

HEDVIG [*with a quick glance at him, represses a smile and asks*]. Why do you say "the depths of the sea"?

GREGERS. What else should I say?

HEDVIG. You could say "the bottom of the sea." [1]

GREGERS. Oh, mayn't I just as well say the depths of the sea?

HEDVIG. Yes; but it sounds so strange to me when other people speak of the depths of the sea.

GREGERS. Why so? Tell me why?

HEDVIG. No, I won't; it's so stupid.

GREGERS. Oh no, I am sure it's not. Do tell me why you smiled.

HEDVIG. Well, this is the reason: whenever I come to realise suddenly — in a flash — what is in there, it always seems to me that the whole room and everything in it should be called "the depths of the sea." — But that is so stupid.

GREGERS. You mustn't say that.

HEDVIG. Oh yes, for you know it is only a garret.

GREGERS [*looks fixedly at her*]. Are you so sure of that?

HEDVIG [*astonished*]. That it's a garret?

GREGERS. Are you quite certain of it?

[HEDVIG *is silent, and looks at him open-mouthed.* GINA *comes in from the kitchen with the table things*]

GREGERS [*rising*]. I have come in upon you too early.

GINA. Oh, you must be somewhere; and we're nearly ready now, anyway. Clear the table, Hedvig.

[HEDVIG *clears away her things; she and* GINA *lay the cloth during what follows.* GREGERS *seats himself in the arm-chair, and turns over an album*]

GREGERS. I hear you can retouch, Mrs. Ekdal.

GINA [*with a side glance*]. Yes, I can.

GREGERS. That was exceedingly lucky.

GINA. How — lucky?

GREGERS. Since Ekdal took to photography, I mean.

HEDVIG. Mother can take photographs too.

GINA. Oh, yes; I was bound to learn that.

GREGERS. So it is really you that carry on the business, I suppose?

GINA. Yes, when Ekdal hasn't time himself ——

GREGERS. He is a great deal taken up with his old father, I dare say.

GINA. Yes; and then you can't expect a man like Ekdal to do nothing

[1] Gregers here uses the old-fashioned expression "havsens bund", while Hedvig would have him use the more commonplace "havets bund" or "havbunden."

but take car-de-visits of Dick, Tom, and Harry.

GREGERS. I quite agree with you; but having once gone in for the thing ——

GINA. You can surely understand, Mr. Werle, that Ekdal's not like one of your common photographers.

GREGERS. Of course not; but still ——

[*A shot is fired within the garret*]

GREGERS [*starting up*]. What's that?

GINA. Ugh! now they're firing again!

GREGERS. Have they firearms in there?

HEDVIG. They are out shooting.

GREGERS. What! [*At the door of the garret*] Are you shooting, Hialmar?

HIALMAR [*inside the net*]. Are you there? I didn't know; I was so taken up —— [*To* HEDVIG] Why did you not let us know?

[*Comes into the studio*]

GREGERS. Do you go shooting in the garret?

HIALMAR [*showing a double-barrelled pistol*]. Oh, only with this thing.

GINA. Yes, you and grandfather will do yourselves a mischief some day with that there pigstol.

HIALMAR [*with irritation*]. I believe I have told you that this kind of firearm is called a pistol.

GINA. Oh, that doesn't make it much better, that I can see.

GREGERS. So you have become a sportsman too, Hialmar.

HIALMAR. Only a little rabbit-shooting now and then. Mostly to please father, you understand.

GINA. Men are strange beings; they must always have something to pervert theirselves with.

HIALMAR [*snappishly*]. Just so; we must always have something to divert ourselves with.

GINA. Yes, that's just what I say.

HIALMAR. H'm. [*To* GREGERS] You see the garret is fortunately so situated that no one can hear us shooting. [*Lays the pistol on the top shelf of the bookcase*] Don't touch the pistol, Hedvig! One of the barrels is loaded; remember that.

GREGERS [*looking through the net*]. You have a fowling-piece too, I see.

HIALMAR. That is father's old gun. It's of no use now; something has gone wrong with the lock. But it's fun to have it all the same; for we can take it to pieces now and then, and clean and grease it, and screw it together again. — Of course, it's mostly father that fiddle-faddles with all that sort of thing.

HEDVIG [*beside* GREGERS]. Now you can see the wild duck properly.

GREGERS. I was just looking at her. One of her wings seems to me to droop a bit.

HEDVIG. Well, no wonder; her wing was broken, you know.

GREGERS. And she trails one foot a little. Isn't that so?

HIALMAR. Perhaps a very little bit.

HEDVIG. Yes, it was by that foot the dog took hold of her.

HIALMAR. But otherwise she hasn't the least thing the matter with her; and that is simply marvellous for a creature that has a charge of shot in her body, and has been between a dog's teeth ——

GREGERS [*with a glance at* HEDVIG]. —— and that has lain in the depths of the sea — so long.

HEDVIG [*smiling*]. Yes.

GINA [*laying the table*]. That blessëd wild duck! What a lot of fuss you do make over her.

HIALMAR. H'm; — will lunch soon be ready?

GINA. Yes, directly. Hedvig, you must come and help me now.

[GINA *and* HEDVIG *go out into the kitchen*]

HIALMAR [*in a low voice*]. I think you had better not stand there looking in at father; he doesn't like it. [GREGERS *moves away from the garret door*] Besides, I may as well shut up before the others come. [*Claps his hands to drive the fowls back*] Shh — shh, in with you! [*Draws up the curtain and pulls the doors together*] All the contrivances are my own invention. It's really quite amusing to have things of this sort to potter with, and to put to rights when they get out of order. And it's absolutely necessary, too; for Gina objects to having rabbits and fowls in the studio.

GREGERS. To be sure; and I suppose the studio is your wife's special department?

HIALMAR. As a rule, I leave the everyday details of business to her; for then I can take refuge in the parlour and give my mind to more important things.

GREGERS. What things may they be, Hialmar?

HIALMAR. I wonder you have not asked that question sooner. But perhaps you haven't heard of the invention?

GREGERS. The invention? No.

HIALMAR. Really? Have you not? Oh no, out there in the wilds ——

GREGERS. So you have invented something, have you?

HIALMAR. It is not quite completed yet; but I am working at it. You can easily imagine that when I resolved to devote myself to photography, it wasn't simply with the idea of taking likenesses of all sorts of commonplace people.

GREGERS. No; your wife was saying the same thing just now.

HIALMAR. I swore that if I consecrated my powers to this handicraft, I would so exalt it that it should become both an art and a science. And to that end I determined to make this great invention.

GREGERS. And what is the nature of the invention? What purpose does it serve?

HIALMAR. Oh, my dear fellow, you mustn't ask for details yet. It takes time, you see. And you must not think that my motive is vanity. It is not for my own sake that I am working. Oh no; it is my life's mission that stands before me night and day.

GREGERS. What is your life's mission?

HIALMAR. Do you forget the old man with the silver hair?

GREGERS. Your poor father? Well, but what can you do for him?

HIALMAR. I can raise up his self-respect from the dead, by restoring the name of Ekdal to honour and dignity.

GREGERS. Then that is your life's mission?

HIALMAR. Yes. I will rescue the shipwrecked man. For shipwrecked he was, by the very first blast of the storm. Even while those terrible investigations were going on, he was no longer himself. That pistol there — the one we use to shoot rabbits with — has played its part in the tragedy of the house of Ekdal.

GREGERS. The pistol? Indeed?

HIALMAR. When the sentence of imprisonment was passed — he had the pistol in his hand ——

GREGERS. Had he ——?

HIALMAR. Yes; but he dared not use it. His courage failed him. So broken, so demoralised was he even then! Oh, can you understand it? He, a soldier; he, who had shot nine bears, and who was descended from two lieutenant-colonels — one after the other of course. Can you understand it, Gregers?

GREGERS. Yes, I understand it well enough.

HIALMAR. I cannot. And once more the pistol played a part in the history of our house. When he had put on the grey clothes and was under lock and key — oh, that was a terrible time for me, I can tell you. I kept the blinds drawn down over both my windows. When I peeped out, I saw the sun shining as if nothing had happened. I could not understand it. I saw people going along the street, laughing and talking about indifferent things. I could not understand it. It seemed to me that the whole of existence must be at a standstill — as if under an eclipse.

GREGERS. I felt like that too, when my mother died.

HIALMAR. It was in such an hour that Hialmar Ekdal pointed the pistol at his own breast.

GREGERS. You too thought of ——!

HIALMAR. Yes.

GREGERS. But you did not fire?

HIALMAR. No. At the decisive moment I won the victory over myself. I remained in life. But I can assure you it takes some courage to choose life under circumstances like those.

GREGERS. Well, that depends on how you look at it.

HIALMAR. Yes, indeed, it takes courage. But I am glad I was firm: for now I shall soon perfect my invention; and Dr. Relling thinks, as I do myself, that father may be allowed to wear his uniform again. I will demand that as my sole reward.

GREGERS. So that is what he meant about his uniform ——?

HIALMAR. Yes, that is what he most yearns for. You can't think how my heart bleeds for him. Every time we celebrate any little family festival — Gina's and my wedding-day, or whatever it may be — in comes the old man in the lieutenant's uniform of happier days. But if he only hears a knock at the door — for he daren't show himself to strangers, you know — he hurries back to his room again as fast as his old legs can carry him. Oh, it's heart-rending for a son to see such things!

GREGERS. How long do you think

it will take you to finish your invention?

HIALMAR. Come now, you mustn't expect me to enter into particulars like that. An invention is not a thing completely under one's own control. It depends largely on inspiration — on intuition — and it is almost impossible to predict when the inspiration may come.

GREGERS. But it's advancing?

HIALMAR. Yes, certainly, it is advancing. I turn it over in my mind every day; I am full of it. Every afternoon, when I have had my dinner, I shut myself up in the parlour, where I can ponder undisturbed. But I can't be goaded to it; it's not a bit of good; Relling says so too.

GREGERS. And you don't think that all that business in the garret draws you off and distracts you too much?

HIALMAR. No, no, no; quite the contrary. You mustn't say that. I cannot be everlastingly absorbed in the same laborious train of thought. I must have something alongside of it to fill up the time of waiting. The inspiration, the intuition, you see — when it comes, it comes, and there's an end of it.

GREGERS. My dear Hialmar, I almost think you have something of the wild duck in you.

HIALMAR. Something of the wild duck? How do you mean?

GREGERS. You have dived down and bitten yourself fast in the undergrowth.

HIALMAR. Are you alluding to the well-nigh fatal shot that has broken my father's wing — and mine too?

GREGERS. Not exactly to that. I don't say that your wing has been broken; but you have strayed into a poisonous marsh, Hialmar; an insidious disease has taken hold of you, and you have sunk down to die in the dark.

HIALMAR. I? To die in the dark? Look here, Gregers, you must really leave off talking such nonsense.

GREGERS. Don't be afraid; I shall find a way to help you up again. I too have a mission in life now; I found it yesterday.

HIALMAR. That's all very well; but you will please leave me out of it. I can assure you that — apart from my very natural melancholy, of course — I am as contented as any one can wish to be.

GREGERS. Your contentment is an effect of the marsh poison.

HIALMAR. Now, my dear Gregers, pray do not go on about disease and poison; I am not used to that sort of talk. In my house nobody ever speaks to me about unpleasant things.

GREGERS. Ah, that I can easily believe.

HIALMAR. It's not good for me, you see. And there are no marsh poisons here, as you express it. The poor photographer's roof is lowly, I know — and my circumstances are narrow. But I am an inventor, and I am the breadwinner of a family. That exalts me above my mean surroundings. — Ah, here comes lunch!

[GINA *and* HEDVIG *bring bottles of ale, a decanter of brandy, glasses, etc. At the same time,* RELLING *and* MOLVIK *enter from the passage; they are both without hat or overcoat.* MOLVIK *is dressed in black*]

GINA [*placing the things upon the table*]. Ah, you two have come in the nick of time.

RELLING. Molvik got it into his head that he could smell herring-salad, and then there was no holding him. — Good morning again, Ekdal.

HIALMAR. Gregers, let me introduce you to Mr. Molvik. Doctor —— Oh, you know Relling, don't you?

GREGERS. Yes, slightly.

RELLING. Oh, Mr. Werle, junior! Yes, we two have had one or two little skirmishes up at the Höidal works. You've just moved in?

GREGERS. I moved in this morning.

RELLING. Molvik and I live right under you; so you haven't far to go for the doctor and the clergyman, if you should need anything in that line.

GREGERS. Thanks, it's not quite unlikely; for yesterday we were thirteen at table.

HIALMAR. Oh, come now, don't let us get upon unpleasant subjects again!

RELLING. You may make your mind easy, Ekdal; I'll be hanged if the finger of fate points to you.

HIALMAR. I should hope not for the sake of my family. But let us sit down now, and eat and drink and be merry.

GREGERS. Shall we not wait for your father?

HIALMAR. No, his lunch will be taken in to him later. Come along!

[*The men seat themselves at table, and eat and drink.* GINA *and* HEDVIG *go in and out and wait upon them*]

RELLING. Molvik was frightfully screwed yesterday, Mrs. Ekdal.

GINA. Really? Yesterday again?

RELLING. Didn't you hear him when I brought him home last night?

GINA. No, I can't say I did.

RELLING. That was a good thing, for Molvik was disgusting last night.

GINA. Is that true, Molvik?

MOLVIK. Let us draw a veil over last night's proceedings. That sort of thing is totally foreign to my better self.

RELLING [*to* GREGERS]. It comes over him like a sort of possession, and then I have to go out on the loose with him. Mr. Molvik is dæmonic, you see.

GREGERS. Dæmonic?

RELLING. Molvik is dæmonic, yes.

GREGERS. H'm.

RELLING. And dæmonic natures are not made to walk straight through the world; they must meander a little now and then. — Well, so you still stick up there at those horrible grimy works?

GREGERS. I have stuck there until now.

RELLING. And did you ever manage to collect that claim you went about presenting?

GREGERS. Claim? [*Understands him*] Ah, I see.

HIALMAR. Have you been presenting claims, Gregers?

GREGERS. Oh, nonsense.

RELLING. Faith, but he has, though! He went round to all the cottars' cabins presenting something he called "the claim of the ideal."

GREGERS. I was young then.

RELLING. You're right; you were very young. And as for the claim of the ideal — you never got it honoured while *I* was up there.

GREGERS. Nor since either.

RELLING. Ah, then you've learnt to knock a little discount off, I expect.

GREGERS. Never, when I have a true man to deal with.

HIALMAR. No, I should think not, indeed. A little butter, Gina.

RELLING. And a slice of bacon for Molvik.

MOLVIK. Ugh! not bacon!

[*A knock at the garret door*]

HIALMAR. Open the door, Hedvig; father wants to come out.

[HEDVIG *goes over and opens the door a little way;* EKDAL *enters with a fresh rabbit-skin; she closes the door after him*]

EKDAL. Good morning, gentlemen! Good sport to-day. Shot a big one.

HIALMAR. And you've gone and skinned it without waiting for me ——!

EKDAL. Salted it too. It's good tender meat, is rabbit; it's sweet; it tastes like sugar. Good appetite to you, gentlemen!

[*Goes into his room*]

MOLVIK [*rising*]. Excuse me ——; I can't ——; I must get downstairs immediately ——

RELLING. Drink some soda water, man!

MOLVIK [*hurrying away*]. Ugh — ugh!

[*Goes out by the passage door*]

RELLING [*to* HIALMAR]. Let us drain a glass to the old hunter.

HIALMAR [*clinks glasses with him*]. To the undaunted sportsman who has looked death in the face!

RELLING. To the grey-haired —— [*Drinks*] By-the-bye, is his hair grey or white?

HIALMAR. Something between the two, I fancy; for that matter, he has very few hairs left of any colour.

RELLING. Well well, one can get through the world with a wig. After all, you are a happy man, Ekdal; you have your noble mission to labour for ——

HIALMAR. And I do labour, I can tell you.

RELLING. And then you have your excellent wife, shuffling quietly in and out in her felt slippers, with that see-saw walk of hers, and making everything cosy and comfortable about you.

HIALMAR. Yes, Gina — [*Nods to her*] — you are a good helpmate on the path of life.

GINA. Oh, don't sit there cricketizing me.

RELLING. And your Hedvig too, Ekdal!

HIALMAR [*affected*]. The child, yes! The child before everything! Hedvig, come here to me. [*Strokes her hair*] What day is it to-morrow, eh?

HEDVIG [*shaking him*]. Oh no, you're not to say anything, father.

HIALMAR. It cuts me to the heart when I think what a poor affair it will be; only a little festivity in the garret ——

HEDVIG. Oh, but that's just what I like!

RELLING. Just you wait till the wonderful invention sees the light, Hedvig!

HIALMAR. Yes indeed — then you shall see ——! Hedvig, I have resolved to make your future secure. You shall live in comfort all your days. I will demand — something or other — on your behalf. That shall be the poor inventor's sole reward.

HEDVIG [*whispering, with her arms round his neck*]. Oh, you dear, kind father!

RELLING [*to* GREGERS]. Come now, don't you find it pleasant, for once in a way, to sit at a well-spread table in a happy family circle?

HIALMAR. Ah yes, I really prize these social hours.

GREGERS. For my part, I don't thrive in marsh vapours.

RELLING. Marsh vapours?

HIALMAR. Oh, don't begin with that stuff again!

GINA. Goodness knows there's no vapours in this house, Mr. Werle; I give the place a good airing every blessed day.

GREGERS [*leaves the table*]. No airing you can give will drive out the taint I mean.

HIALMAR. Taint!

GINA. Yes, what do you say to that, Ekdal?

RELLING. Excuse me — may it not be you yourself that have brought the taint from those mines up there?

GREGERS. It is like you to call what I bring into this house a taint.

RELLING [*goes up to him*]. Look here, Mr. Werle, junior: I have a strong suspicion that you are still carrying about that "claim of the ideal" large as life, in your coat-tail pocket.

GREGERS. I carry it in my breast.

RELLING. Well, wherever you carry it, I advise you not to come dunning us with it here, so long as *I* am on the premises.

GREGERS. And if I do so none the less?

RELLING. Then you'll go headforemost down the stairs; now I've warned you.

HIALMAR [*rising*]. Oh, but Relling ——!

GREGERS. Yes, you may turn me out ——

GINA [*interposing between them*]. We can't have that, Relling. But I must say, Mr. Werle, it ill becomes you to talk about vapours and taints, after all the mess you made with your stove.

[*A knock at the passage door*]

HEDVIG. Mother, there's somebody knocking.

HIALMAR. There now, we're going to have a whole lot of people!

GINA. I'll go —— [*Goes over and opens the door, starts, and draws back*] Oh — oh dear!

[WERLE, *in a fur coat, advances one step into the room*]

WERLE. Excuse me; but I think my son is staying here.

GINA [*with a gulp*]. Yes.

HIALMAR [*approaching him*]. Won't you do us the honour to ——?

WERLE. Thank you, I merely wish to speak to my son.

GREGERS. What is it? Here I am.

WERLE. I want a few words with you, in your room.

GREGERS. In my room? Very well ——

[*About to go*]

GINA. No, no, your room's not in a fit state ——

WERLE. Well then, out in the passage here; I want to have a few words with you alone.

HIALMAR. You can have them here, sir. Come into the parlour, Relling.

[HIALMAR *and* RELLING *go off to the right.* GINA *takes* HEDVIG *with her into the kitchen*]

GREGERS [*after a short pause*]. Well, now we are alone.

WERLE. From something you let fall last evening, and from your coming to lodge with the Ekdals, I can't help inferring that you intend to make yourself unpleasant to me, in one way or another.

GREGERS. I intend to open Hialmar Ekdal's eyes. He shall see his position as it really is — that is all.

WERLE. Is that the mission in life you spoke of yesterday?

GREGERS. Yes. You have left me no other.

WERLE. Is it I, then, that have crippled your mind, Gregers?

GREGERS. You have crippled my whole life. I am not thinking of all that about mother —— But it's thanks to you that I am continually haunted and harassed by a guilty conscience.

WERLE. Indeed! It is your conscience that troubles you, is it?

GREGERS. I ought to have taken a stand against you when the trap was set for Lieutenant Ekdal. I ought to have cautioned him; for I had a misgiving as to what was in the wind.

WERLE. Yes, that was the time to have spoken.

GREGERS. I did not dare to, I was so cowed and spiritless. I was mortally afraid of you — not only then, but long afterwards.

WERLE. You have got over that fear now, it appears.

GREGERS. Yes, fortunately. The wrong done to old Ekdal, both by me and by — others, can never be undone; but Hialmar I can rescue from all the falsehood and deception that are bringing him to ruin.

WERLE. Do you think that will be doing him a kindness?

GREGERS. I have not the least doubt of it.

WERLE. You think our worthy photographer is the sort of man to appreciate such friendly offices?

GREGERS. Yes, I do.

WERLE. H'm — we shall see.

GREGERS. Besides, if I am to go on living, I must try to find some cure for my sick conscience.

WERLE. It will never be sound. Your conscience has been sickly from childhood. That is a legacy from your mother, Gregers — the only one she left you.

GREGERS [*with a scornful half-smile*]. Have you not yet forgiven her for the mistake you made in supposing she would bring you a fortune?

WERLE. Don't let us wander from the point. — Then you hold to your purpose of setting young Ekdal upon what you imagine to be the right scent?

GREGERS. Yes, that is my fixed resolve.

WERLE. Well, in that case I might have spared myself this visit; for of course it is useless to ask whether you will return home with me?

GREGERS. Quite useless.

WERLE. And I suppose you won't enter the firm either?

GREGERS. No.

WERLE. Very good. But as I am thinking of marrying again, your share in the property will fall to you at once.[1]

GREGERS [*quickly*]. No, I do not want that.

WERLE. You don't want it?

GREGERS. No, I dare not take it, for conscience' sake.

WERLE [*after a pause*]. Are you going up to the works again?

GREGERS. No; I consider myself released from your service.

WERLE. But what are you going to do?

GREGERS. Only to fulfil my mission; nothing more.

WERLE. Well, but afterwards? What are you going to live upon?

GREGERS. I have laid by a little out of my salary.

WERLE. How long will that last?

GREGERS. I think it will last my time.

WERLE. What do you mean?

GREGERS. I shall answer no more questions.

WERLE. Good-bye then, Gregers.

GREGERS. Good-bye.

[WERLE *goes*]

HIALMAR [*peeping in*]. He's gone, isn't he?

GREGERS. Yes.

[HIALMAR *and* RELLING *enter; also* GINA *and* HEDVIG *from the kitchen*]

RELLING. That luncheon-party was a failure.

GREGERS. Put on your coat, Hialmar; I want you to come for a long walk with me.

HIALMAR. With pleasure. What was it your father wanted? Had it anything to do with me?

GREGERS. Come along. We must have a talk. I'll go and put on my overcoat.

[*Goes out by the passage door*]

GINA. You shouldn't go out with him, Ekdal.

RELLING. No, don't you do it. Stay where you are.

HIALMAR [*gets his hat and overcoat*]. Oh, nonsense! When a friend of my youth feels impelled to open his mind to me in private ——

RELLING. But devil take it — don't you see that the fellow's mad, cracked, demented!

GINA. There, what did I tell you! His mother before him had crazy fits like that sometimes.

[1] By Norwegian law, before a widower can marry again, a certain proportion of his property must be settled on his children by his former marriage.

HIALMAR. The more need for a friend's watchful eye. [*To* GINA] Be sure you have dinner ready in good time. Good-bye for the present.

[*Goes out by the passage door*]

RELLING. It's a thousand pities the fellow didn't go to hell through one of the Höidal mines.

GINA. Good Lord! what makes you say that?

RELLING [*muttering*]. Oh, I have my own reasons.

GINA. Do you think young Werle is really mad?

RELLING. No, worse luck; he's no madder than most other people. But one disease he has certainly got in his system.

GINA. What is it that's the matter with him?

RELLING. Well, I'll tell you, Mrs. Ekdal. He is suffering from an acute attack of integrity.

GINA. Integrity?

HEDVIG. Is that a kind of disease?

RELLING. Yes, it's a national disease; but it only appears sporadically. [*Nods to* GINA] Thanks for your hospitality.

[*He goes out by the passage door*]

GINA [*moving restlessly to and fro*]. Ugh, that Gregers Werle — he was always a wretched creature.

HEDVIG [*standing by the table and looking searchingly at her*]. I think all this is very strange.

ACT IV

HIALMAR EKDAL'S *studio. A photograph has just been taken; a camera with the cloth over it, a pedestal, two chairs, a folding table, etc., are standing out in the room. Afternoon light; the sun is going down; a little later it begins to grow dusk.*

GINA *stands in the passage doorway, with a little box and a wet glass plate in her hand, and is speaking to somebody outside.*

GINA. Yes, certainly. When I make a promise I keep it. The first dozen shall be ready on Monday. Good afternoon.

[*Some one is heard going downstairs.* GINA *shuts the door, slips the plate into the box, and puts it into the covered camera*]

HEDVIG [*comes in from the kitchen*]. Are they gone?

GINA [*tidying up*]. Yes, thank goodness, I've got rid of them at last.

HEDVIG. But can you imagine why father hasn't come home yet?

GINA. Are you sure he's not down in Relling's room?

HEDVIG. No, he's not; I ran down the kitchen stair just now and asked.

GINA. And his dinner standing and getting cold, too.

HEDVIG. Yes, I can't understand it. Father's always so careful to be home to dinner!

GINA. Oh, he'll be here directly, you'll see.

HEDVIG. I wish he would come; everything seems so queer to-day.

GINA [*calls out*]. There he is!

[HIALMAR EKDAL *comes in at the passage door*]

HEDVIG [*going to him*]. Father! Oh what a time we've been waiting for you!

GINA [*glancing sidelong at him*]. You've been out a long time, Ekdal.

HIALMAR [*without looking at her*]. Rather long, yes.

[*He takes off his overcoat;* GINA *and* HEDVIG *go to help him; he motions them away*]

GINA. Perhaps you've had dinner with Werle?

HIALMAR [*hanging up his coat*]. No.

GINA [*going towards the kitchen door*]. Then I'll bring some in for you.

HIALMAR. No; let the dinner alone. I want nothing to eat.

HEDVIG [*going nearer to him*]. Are you not well, father?

HIALMAR. Well? Oh yes, well enough. We have had a tiring walk, Gregers and I.

GINA. You didn't ought to have gone so far, Ekdal, you're not used to it.

HIALMAR. H'm; there's many a thing a man must get used to in this world. [*Wanders about the room*] Has any one been here whilst I was out?

GINA. Nobody but the two sweethearts.

HIALMAR. No new orders?

GINA. No, not to-day.

HEDVIG. There will be some to-morrow, father, you'll see.

HIALMAR. I hope there will; for to-morrow, I am going to set to work in real earnest.

HEDVIG. To-morrow! Don't you remember what day it is to-morrow?

HIALMAR. Oh yes, by-the-bye ——. Well, the day after, then. Henceforth

I mean to do everything myself; I shall take all the work into my own hands.

GINA. Why, what can be the good of that, Ekdal? It'll only make your life a burden to you. I can manage the photography all right; and you can go on working at your invention.

HEDVIG. And think of the wild duck, father, — and all the hens and rabbits and ——!

HIALMAR. Don't talk to me of all that trash! From to-morrow I will never set foot in the garret again.

HEDVIG. Oh but, father, you promised that we should have a little party ——

HIALMAR. H'm, true. Well then, from the day after to-morrow. I should almost like to wring that cursëd wild duck's neck!

HEDVIG [*shrieks*]. The wild duck!

GINA. Well I never!

HEDVIG [*shaking him*]. Oh no, father; you know it's my wild duck!

HIALMAR. That is why I don't do it. I haven't the heart to — for your sake, Hedvig. But in my inmost soul I feel that I ought to do it. I ought not to tolerate under my roof a creature that has been through those hands.

GINA. Why, good gracious, even if grandfather did get it from that poor creature, Pettersen ——

HIALMAR [*wandering about*]. There are certain claims — what shall I call them? — let me say claims of the ideal — certain obligations, which a man cannot disregard without injury to his soul.

HEDVIG [*going after him*]. But think of the wild duck, — the poor wild duck!

HIALMAR [*stops*]. I tell you I will spare it — for your sake. Not a hair of its head shall be — I mean, it shall be spared. There are greater problems than that to be dealt with. But you should go out a little now, Hedvig, as usual; it is getting dusk enough for you now.

HEDVIG. No, I don't care about going out now.

HIALMAR. Yes, do; it seems to me your eyes are blinking a great deal; all these vapours in here are bad for you. The air is heavy under this roof.

HEDVIG. Very well then, I'll run down the kitchen stair and go for a little walk. My cloak and hat? — oh, they're in my own room. Father — be sure you don't do the wild duck any harm whilst I'm out.

HIALMAR. Not a feather of its head shall be touched. [*Draws her to him*] You and I, Hedvig — we two ——! Well, go along.

[HEDVIG *nods to her parents and goes out through the kitchen*]

HIALMAR [*walks about without looking up*]. Gina.

GINA. Yes?

HIALMAR. From to-morrow — or, say, from the day after to-morrow — I should like to keep the household account-book myself.

GINA. Do you want to keep the accounts too, now?

HIALMAR. Yes; or to check the receipts at any rate.

GINA. Lord help us! that's soon done.

HIALMAR. One would hardly think so; at any rate you seem to make the money go a very long way. [*Stops and looks at her*]. How do you manage it?

GINA. It's because me and Hedvig, we need so little.

HIALMAR. Is it the case that father is very liberally paid for the copying he does for Mr. Werle?

GINA. I don't know as he gets anything out of the way. I don't know the rates for that sort of work.

HIALMAR. Well, what does he get, about? Let me hear!

GINA. Oh, it varies; I daresay it'll come to about as much as he costs us, with a little pocket-money over.

HIALMAR. As much as he costs us! And you have never told me this before!

GINA. No, how could I tell you? It pleased you so much to think he got everything from you.

HIALMAR. And he gets it from Mr. Werle.

GINA. Oh well, he has plenty and to spare, he has.

HIALMAR. Light the lamp for me, please!

GINA [*lighting the lamp*]. And of course we don't know as it's Mr. Werle himself; it may be Gråberg ——

HIALMAR. Why attempt such an evasion?

GINA. I don't know; I only thought ——

HIALMAR. H'm!

GINA. It wasn't me that got grandfather that copying. It was Bertha, when she used to come about us.

HIALMAR. It seems to me your voice is trembling.

GINA [*putting the lamp-shade on*]. Is it?

HIALMAR. And your hands are shaking, are they not?

GINA [*firmly*]. Come right out with it, Ekdal. What has he been saying about me?

HIALMAR. Is it true — can it be true that — that there was an — an understanding between you and Mr. Werle, while you were in service there?

GINA. That's not true. Not at that time. Mr. Werle did come after me, that's a fact. And his wife thought there was something in it, and then she made such a hocus-pocus and hurly-burly, and she hustled me and bustled me about so, that I left her service.

HIALMAR. But afterwards, then?

GINA. Well, then I went home. And mother — well, she wasn't the woman you took her for, Ekdal; she kept on worrying and worrying at me about one thing and another — for Mr. Werle was a widower by that time.

HIALMAR. Well, and then?

GINA. I suppose you've got to know it. He gave me no peace until he'd had his way.

HIALMAR [*striking his hands together*]. And this is the mother of my child! How could you hide this from me?

GINA. Yes, it was wrong of me; I ought certainly to have told you long ago.

HIALMAR. You should have told me at the very first; — then I should have known the sort of woman you were.

GINA. But would you have married me all the same?

HIALMAR. How can you dream that I would?

GINA. That's just why I didn't dare tell you anything, then. For I'd come to care for you so much, you see; and I couldn't go and make myself utterly miserable ——

HIALMAR [*walks about*]. And this is my Hedvig's mother. And to know that all I see before me — [*Kicks at a chair*] — all that I call my home — I owe to a favoured predecessor! Oh that scoundrel Werle!

GINA. Do you repent of the fourteen — the fifteen years as we've lived together?

HIALMAR [*placing himself in front of her*]. Have you not every day, every hour, repented of the spider's-web of deceit you have spun around me? Answer me that! How could you help writhing with penitence and remorse?

GINA. Oh, my dear Ekdal, I've had all I could do to look after the house and get through the day's work ——

HIALMAR. Then you never think of reviewing your past?

GINA. No; Heaven knows I'd almost forgotten those old stories.

HIALMAR. Oh, this dull, callous contentment! To me there is something revolting about it. Think of it — never so much as a twinge of remorse!

GINA. But tell me, Ekdal — what would have become of you if you hadn't had a wife like me?

HIALMAR. Like you ——!

GINA. Yes; for you know I've always been a bit more practical and wide-awake than you. Of course I'm a year or two older.

HIALMAR. What would have become of me?

GINA. You'd got into all sorts of bad ways when first you met me; that you can't deny.

HIALMAR. "Bad ways" do you call them? Little do you know what a man goes through when he is in grief and despair — especially a man of my fiery temperament.

GINA. Well, well, that may be so. And I've no reason to crow over you, neither; for you turned a moral of a husband, that you did, as soon as ever you had a house and home of your own. — And now we'd got everything so nice and cosy about us; and me and Hedvig was just thinking we'd soon be able to let ourselves go a bit, in the way of both food and clothes.

HIALMAR. In the swamp of deceit, yes.

GINA. I wish to goodness that detestable being had never set his foot inside our doors!

HIALMAR. And I, too, thought my home such a pleasant one. That was a delusion. Where shall I now find the elasticity of spirit to bring my invention into the world of reality? Perhaps it will die with me; and then it will be your past, Gina, that will have killed it.

GINA [*nearly crying*]. You mustn't say such things, Ekdal. Me, that has only wanted to do the best I could for you, all my days!

HIALMAR. I ask you, what becomes of the breadwinner's dream? When I used to lie in there on the sofa and brood over my invention, I had a clear enough presentiment that it would sap my vitality to the last drop. I felt

even then that the day when I held the patent in my hand — that day — would bring my — release. And then it was my dream that you should live on after me, the dead inventor's well-to-do widow.

GINA [*drying her tears*]. No, you mustn't talk like that, Ekdal. May the Lord never let me see the day I am left a widow!

HIALMAR. Oh, the whole dream has vanished. It is all over now. All over!

[GREGERS WERLE *opens the passage door cautiously and looks in*]

GREGERS. May I come in?

HIALMAR. Yes, come in.

GREGERS [*comes forward, his face beaming with satisfaction, and holds out both his hands to them*]. Well, dear friends ——! [*Looks from one to the other, and whispers to* HIALMAR] Have you not done it yet?

HIALMAR [*aloud*]. It is done.

GREGERS. It is?

HIALMAR. I have passed through the bitterest moments of my life.

GREGERS. But also, I trust, the most ennobling.

HIALMAR. Well, at any rate, we have got through it for the present.

GINA. God forgive you, Mr. Werle.

GREGERS [*in great surprise*]. But I don't understand this.

HIALMAR. What don't you understand?

GREGERS. After so great a crisis — a crisis that is to be the starting-point of an entirely new life — of a communion founded on truth, and free from all taint of deception ——

HIALMAR. Yes yes, I know; I know that quite well.

GREGERS. I confidently expected, when I entered the room, to find the light of transfiguration shining upon me from both husband and wife. And now I see nothing but dullness, oppression, gloom ——

GINA. Oh, is that it?

[*Takes off the lamp-shade*]

GREGERS. You will not understand me, Mrs. Ekdal. Ah well, you, I suppose, need time to ——. But you, Hialmar? Surely you feel a new consecration after the great crisis.

HIALMAR. Yes, of course I do. That is — in a sort of way.

GREGERS. For surely nothing in the world can compare with the joy of forgiving one who has erred, and raising her up to oneself in love.

HIALMAR. Do you think a man can so easily throw off the effects of the bitter cup I have drained?

GREGERS. No, not a common man, perhaps. But a man like you ——!

HIALMAR. Good God! I know that well enough. But you must keep me up to it, Gregers. It takes time, you know.

GREGERS. You have much of the wild duck in you, Hialmar.

[RELLING *has come in at the passage door*]

RELLING. Oho! is the wild duck to the fore again?

HIALMAR. Yes; Mr. Werle's wing-broken victim.

RELLING. Mr. Werle's ——? So it's him you are talking about?

HIALMAR. Him and — ourselves.

RELLING [*in an undertone to* GREGERS]. May the devil fly away with you!

HIALMAR. What is that you are saying?

RELLING. Only uttering a heartfelt wish that this quack-salver would take himself off. If he stays here, he is quite equal to making an utter mess of life, for both of you.

GREGERS. These two will not make a mess of life, Mr. Relling. Of course I won't speak of Hialmar — him we know. But she, too, in her innermost heart, has certainly something loyal and sincere ——

GINA [*almost crying*]. You might have let me alone for what I was, then.

RELLING [*to* GREGERS]. Is it rude to ask what you really want in this house?

GREGERS. To lay the foundations of a true marriage.

RELLING. So you don't think Ekdal's marriage is good enough as it is?

GREGERS. No doubt it is as good a marriage as most others, worse luck. But a true marriage it has yet to become.

HIALMAR. You have never had eyes for the claims of the ideal, Relling.

RELLING. Rubbish, my boy! — But excuse me, Mr. Werle: how many — in round numbers — how many true marriages have you seen in the course of your life?

GREGERS. Scarcely a single one.

RELLING. Nor I either.

GREGERS. But I have seen in-

numerable marriages of the opposite kind. And it has been my fate to see at close quarters what ruin such a marriage can work in two human souls.

HIALMAR. A man's whole moral basis may give away beneath his feet; that is the terrible part of it.

RELLING. Well, I can't say I've ever been exactly married, so I don't pretend to speak with authority. But this I know, that the child enters into the marriage problem. And you must leave the child in peace.

HIALMAR. Oh — Hedvig! my poor Hedvig!

RELLING. Yes, you must be good enough to keep Hedvig outside of all this. You two are grown-up people; you are free, in God's name, to make what mess and muddle you please of your life. But you must deal cautiously with Hedvig, I tell you; else you may do her a great injury.

HIALMAR. An injury!

RELLING. Yes, or she may do herself an injury — and perhaps others too.

GINA. How can you know that, Relling?

HIALMAR. Her sight is in no immediate danger, is it?

RELLING. I am not talking about her sight. Hedvig is at a critical age. She may be getting all sorts of mischief into her head.

GINA. That's true — I've noticed it already! She's taken to carrying on with the fire, out in the kitchen. She calls it playing at house-on-fire. I'm often scared for fear she really sets fire to the house.

RELLING. You see; I thought as much.

GREGERS [*to* RELLING]. But how do you account for that?

RELLING [*sullenly*]. Her constitution's changing, sir.

HIALMAR. So long as the child has me ——! So long as *I* am above ground ——!

[*A knock at the door*]

GINA. Hush, Ekdal; there's some one in the passage. [*Calls out*] Come in!

[MRS. SÖRBY, *in walking dress, comes in*]

MRS. SÖRBY. Good evening.

GINA [*going towards her*]. Is it really you, Bertha?

MRS. SÖRBY. Yes, of course it is. But I'm disturbing you, I'm afraid?

HIALMAR. No, not at all; an emissary from that house ——

MRS. SÖRBY [*to* GINA]. To tell the truth, I hoped your men-folk would be out at this time. I just ran up to have a little chat with you, and to say good-bye.

GINA. Good-bye? Are you going away, then?

MRS. SÖRBY. Yes, to-morrow morning, — up to Höidal. Mr. Werle started this afternoon. [*Lightly to* GREGERS] He asked me to say good-bye for him.

GINA. Only fancy ——!

HIALMAR. So Mr. Werle has gone? And now you are going after him?

MRS. SÖRBY. Yes, what do you say to that, Ekdal?

HIALMAR. I say: beware!

GREGERS. I must explain the situation. My father and Mrs. Sörby are going to be married.

HIALMAR. Going to be married!

GINA. Oh Bertha! So it's come to that at last!

RELLING [*his voice quivering a little*]. This is surely not true?

MRS. SÖRBY. Yes, my dear Relling, it's true enough.

RELLING. You are going to marry again?

MRS. SÖRBY. Yes, it looks like it. Werle has got a special licence, and we are going to be married quite quietly, up at the works.

GREGERS. Then I must wish you all happiness, like a dutiful stepson.

MRS. SÖRBY. Thank you very much — if you mean what you say. I certainly hope it will lead to happiness, both for Werle and for me.

RELLING. You have every reason to hope that. Mr. Werle never gets drunk — so far as I know; and I don't suppose he's in the habit of thrashing his wives, like the late lamented horse-doctor.

MRS. SÖRBY. Come now, let Sörby rest in peace. He had his good points too.

RELLING. Mr. Werle has better ones, I have no doubt.

MRS. SÖRBY. He hasn't frittered away all that was good in him, at any rate. The man who does that must take the consequences.

RELLING. I shall go out with Molvik this evening.

MRS. SÖRBY. You mustn't do that, Relling. Don't do it — for my sake.

RELLING. There's nothing else for it.

[*To* HIALMAR] If you're going with us, come along.

GINA. No, thank you. Ekdal doesn't go in for that sort of dissertation.

HIALMAR [*half aloud, in vexation*]. Oh, do hold your tongue!

RELLING. Good-bye, Mrs. — Werle. [*Goes out through the passage door*]

GREGERS [*to* MRS. SÖRBY]. You seem to know Dr. Relling pretty intimately.

MRS. SÖRBY. Yes, we have known each other for many years. At one time it seemed as if things might have gone further between us.

GREGERS. It was surely lucky for you that they did not.

MRS. SÖRBY. You may well say that. But I have always been wary of acting on impulse. A woman can't afford absolutely to throw herself away.

GREGERS. Are you not in the least afraid that I may let my father know about this old friendship?

MRS. SÖRBY. Why, of course I have told him all about it myself.

GREGERS. Indeed?

MRS. SÖRBY. Your father knows every single thing that can, with any truth, be said about me. I have told him all; it was the first thing I did when I saw what was in his mind.

GREGERS. Then you have been franker than most people, I think.

MRS. SÖRBY. I have always been frank. We women find that the best policy.

HIALMAR. What do you say to that, Gina?

GINA. Oh, we're not all alike, us women aren't. Some are made one way, some another.

MRS. SÖRBY. Well, for my part, Gina, I believe it's wisest to do as I've done. And Werle has no secrets either, on his side. That's really the great bond between us, you see. Now he can talk to me as openly as a child. He has never had the chance to do that before. Fancy a man like him, full of health and vigour, passing his whole youth and the best years of his life in listening to nothing but penitential sermons! And very often the sermons had for their text the most imaginary offences — at least so I understand.

GINA. That's true enough.

GREGERS. If you ladies are going to follow up this topic, I had better withdraw.

MRS. SÖRBY. You can stay so far as that's concerned. I shan't say a word more. But I wanted you to know that I had done nothing secretly or in an underhand way. I may seem to have come in for a great piece of luck; and so I have, in a sense. But after all, I don't think I am getting any more than I am giving. I shall stand by him always, and I can tend and care for him as no one else can, now that he is getting helpless.

HIALMAR. Getting helpless?

GREGERS [*to* MRS. SÖRBY]. Hush, don't speak of that here.

MRS. SÖRBY. There is no disguising it any longer, however much he would like to. He is going blind.

HIALMAR [*starts*]. Going blind? That's strange. He too going blind!

GINA. Lots of people do.

MRS. SÖRBY. And you can imagine what that means to a business man. Well, I shall try as well as I can to make my eyes take the place of his. But I mustn't stay any longer; I have such heaps of things to do. — Oh, by-the-bye, Ekdal, I was to tell you that if there is anything Werle can do for you, you must just apply to Gråberg.

GREGERS. That offer I am sure Hialmar Ekdal will decline with thanks.

MRS. SÖRBY. Indeed? I don't think he used to be so ——

GINA. No, Bertha, Ekdal doesn't need anything from Mr. Werle now.

HIALMAR [*slowly, and with emphasis*]. Will you present my compliments to your future husband, and say that I intend very shortly to call upon Mr. Gråberg ——

GREGERS. What! You don't really mean that?

HIALMAR. To call upon Mr. Gråberg, I say, and obtain an account of the sum I owe his principal. I will pay that debt of honour — ha ha ha! a debt of honour, let us call it! In any case, I will pay the whole, with five per cent. interest.

GINA. But, my dear Ekdal, God knows we haven't got the money to do it.

HIALMAR. Be good enough to tell your future husband that I am working assiduously at my invention. Please tell him that what sustains me in this laborious task is the wish to free myself from a torturing burden of debt. That is my reason for proceeding with the invention. The entire profits shall be devoted to releasing me from my

pecuniary obligations to your future husband.

MRS. SÖRBY. Something has happened here.

HIALMAR. Yes, you are right.

MRS. SÖRBY. Well, good-bye. I had something else to speak to you about, Gina; but it must keep till another time. Good-bye.

[HIALMAR *and* GREGERS *bow silently.* GINA *follows* MRS. SÖRBY *to the door*]

HIALMAR. Not beyond the threshold, Gina!

[MRS. SÖRBY *goes;* GINA *shuts the door after her*]

HIALMAR. There now, Gregers: I have got that burden of debt off my mind.

GREGERS. You soon will, at all events.

HIALMAR. I think my attitude may be called correct.

GREGERS. You are the man I have always taken you for.

HIALMAR. In certain cases, it is impossible to disregard the claim of the ideal. Yet, as the breadwinner of a family, I cannot but writhe and groan under it. I can tell you it is no joke for a man without capital to attempt the repayment of a long-standing obligation, over which, so to speak, the dust of oblivion had gathered. But it cannot be helped: the Man in me demands his rights.

GREGERS [*laying his hand on* HIALMAR'S *shoulder*]. My dear Hialmar — was it not a good thing I came?

HIALMAR. Yes.

GREGERS. Are you not glad to have had your true position made clear to you?

HIALMAR [*somewhat impatiently*]. Yes, of course I am. But there is one thing that is revolting to my sense of justice.

GREGERS. And what is that?

HIALMAR. It is that — but I don't know whether I ought to express myself so unreservedly about your father.

GREGERS. Say what you please, so far as I am concerned.

HIALMAR. Well then, is it not exasperating to think that it is not I, but he, who will realise the true marriage?

GREGERS. How can you say such a thing?

HIALMAR. Because it is clearly the case. Isn't the marriage between your father and Mrs. Sörby founded upon complete confidence, upon entire and unreserved candour on both sides? They hide nothing from each other, they keep no secrets in the background; their relation is based, if I may put it so, on mutual confession and absolution.

GREGERS. Well, what then?

HIALMAR. Well, is not that the whole thing? Did you not yourself say that this was precisely the difficulty that had to be overcome in order to found a true marriage?

GREGERS. But this is a totally different matter, Hialmar. You surely don't compare either yourself or your wife with those two ——? Oh, you understand me well enough.

HIALMAR. Say what you like, there is something in all this that hurts and offends my sense of justice. It really looks as if there were no just providence to rule the world.

GINA. Oh no, Ekdal; for God's sake don't say such things.

GREGERS. H'm; don't let us get upon those questions.

HIALMAR. And yet, after all, I cannot but recognise the guiding finger of fate. He is going blind.

GINA. Oh, you can't be sure of that.

HIALMAR. There is no doubt about it. At all events there ought not to be; for in that very fact lies the righteous retribution. He has hoodwinked a confiding fellow creature in days gone by ——

GREGERS. I fear he has hoodwinked many.

HIALMAR. And now comes inexorable, mysterious Fate, and demands Werle's own eyes.

GINA. Oh, how dare you say such dreadful things! You make me quite scared.

HIALMAR. It is profitable, now and then, to plunge deep into the night side of existence.

[HEDVIG, *in her hat and cloak, comes in by the passage door. She is pleasurably excited, and out of breath*]

GINA. Are you back already?

HEDVIG. Yes, I didn't care to go any farther. It was a good thing, too; for I've just met some one at the door.

HIALMAR. It must have been that Mrs. Sörby.

HEDVIG. Yes.

HIALMAR [*walks up and down*]. I

hope you have seen her for the last time.

[*Silence.* HEDVIG, *discouraged, looks first at one and then at the other, trying to divine their frame of mind*]

HEDVIG [*approaching, coaxingly*]. Father.

HIALMAR. Well — what is it, Hedvig?

HEDVIG. Mrs. Sörby had something with her for me.

HIALMAR [*stops*]. For you?

HEDVIG. Yes. Something for to-morrow.

GINA. Bertha has always given you some little thing on your birthday.

HIALMAR. What is it?

HEDVIG. Oh, you mustn't see it now. Mother is to give it to me to-morrow morning before I'm up.

HIALMAR. What is all this hocus-pocus that I am to be kept in the dark about!

HEDVIG [*quickly*]. Oh no, you may see it if you like. It's a big letter.

[*Takes the letter out of her cloak pocket*]

HIALMAR. A letter too?

HEDVIG. Yes, it is only a letter. The rest will come afterwards, I suppose. But fancy — a letter! I've never had a letter before. And there's "Miss" written upon it. [*Reads*] "Miss Hedvig Ekdal." Only fancy — that's me!

HIALMAR. Let me see that letter.

HEDVIG [*hands it to him*]. There it is.

HIALMAR. That is Mr. Werle's hand.

GINA. Are you sure of that, Ekdal?

HIALMAR. Look for yourself.

GINA. Oh, what do *I* know about such-like things?

HIALMAR. Hedvig, may I open the letter — and read it?

HEDVIG. Yes, of course you may, if you want to.

GINA. No, not to-night, Ekdal; it's to be kept till to-morrow.

HEDVIG [*softly*]. Oh, can't you let him read it! It's sure to be something good; and then father will be glad, and everything will be nice again.

HIALMAR. I may open it then?

HEDVIG. Yes do, father. I'm so anxious to know what it is.

HIALMAR. Well and good. [*Opens the letter, takes out a paper, reads it through, and appears bewildered*] What is this ——!

GINA. What does it say?

HEDVIG. Oh yes, father — tell us!

HIALMAR. Be quiet. [*Reads it through again; he has turned pale, but says with self-control*] It is a deed of gift, Hedvig.

HEDVIG. Is it? What sort of gift am I to have?

HIALMAR. Read for yourself.

[HEDVIG *goes over and reads for a time by the lamp*]

HIALMAR [*half aloud, clenching his hands*]. The eyes! The eyes — and then that letter!

HEDVIG [*leaves off reading*]. Yes, but it seems to me that it's grandfather that's to have it.

HIALMAR [*takes the letter from her*]. Gina — can you understand this?

GINA. I know nothing whatever about it; tell me what's the matter.

HIALMAR. Mr. Werle writes to Hedvig that her old grandfather need not trouble himself any longer with the copying, but that he can henceforth draw on the office for a hundred crowns a month ——

GREGERS. Aha!

HEDVIG. A hundred crowns, mother! I read that.

GINA. What a good thing for grandfather!

HIALMAR. —— a hundred crowns a month so long as he needs it — that means, of course, so long as he lives.

GINA. Well, so he's provided for, poor dear.

HIALMAR. But there is more to come. You didn't read that, Hedvig. Afterwards this gift is to pass on to you.

HEDVIG. To me! The whole of it?

HIALMAR. He says that the same amount is assured to you for the whole of your life. Do you hear that, Gina?

GINA. Yes, I hear.

HEDVIG. Fancy — all that money for me! [*Shakes him*] Father, father, aren't you glad ——?

HIALMAR [*eluding her*]. Glad! [*Walks about*] Oh what vistas — what perspectives open up before me! It is Hedvig, Hedvig that he showers these benefactions upon!

GINA. Yes, because it's Hedvig's birthday ——

HEDVIG. And you'll get it all the same, father! You know quite well I shall give all the money to you and mother.

HIALMAR. To mother, yes! There we have it.

GREGERS. Hialmar, this is a trap he is setting for you.

HIALMAR. Do you think it's another trap?

GREGERS. When he was here this morning he said: Hialmar Ekdal is not the man you imagine him to be.

HIALMAR. Not the man ——!

GREGERS. That you shall see, he said.

HIALMAR. He meant you should see that I would let myself be bought off ——!

HEDVIG. Oh mother, what does all this mean?

GINA. Go and take off your things.

[HEDVIG *goes out by the kitchen door, half-crying*]

GREGERS. Yes, Hialmar — now is the time to show who was right, he or I.

HIALMAR [*slowly tears the paper across, lays both pieces on the table, and says*]. Here is my answer.

GREGERS. Just what I expected.

HIALMAR [*goes over to* GINA, *who stands by the stove, and says in a low voice*]. Now please make a clean breast of it. If the connection between you and him was quite over when you — came to care for me, as you call it — why did he place us in a position to marry?

GINA. I suppose he thought as he could come and go in our house.

HIALMAR. Only that? Was not he afraid of a possible contingency?

GINA. I don't know what you mean.

HIALMAR. I want to know whether — your child has the right to live under my roof.

GINA [*draws herself up; her eyes flash*]. You ask that!

HIALMAR. You shall answer me this one question: Does Hedvig belong to me — or ——? Well!

GINA [*looking at him with cold defiance*]. I don't know.

HIALMAR [*quivering a little*]. You don't know!

GINA. How should *I* know? A creature like me ——

HIALMAR [*quietly turning away from her*]. Then I have nothing more to do in this house.

GREGERS. Take care, Hialmar! Think what you are doing!

HIALMAR [*puts on his overcoat*]. In this case, there is nothing for a man like me to think twice about.

GREGERS. Yes indeed, there are endless things to be considered. You three must be together if you are to attain the true frame of mind for self-sacrifice and forgiveness.

HIALMAR. I don't want to attain it. Never, never! My hat! [*Takes his hat*] My home has fallen in ruins about me. [*Bursts into tears*] Gregers, I have no child!

HEDVIG [*who has opened the kitchen door*]. What is that you're saying? [*Coming to him*] Father, father!

GINA. There, you see!

HIALMAR. Don't come near me, Hedvig! Keep far away. I cannot bear to see you. Oh! those eyes ——! Good-bye.

[*Makes for the door*]

HEDVIG [*clinging close to him and screaming loudly*]. No! no! Don't leave me!

GINA [*cries out*]. Look at the child, Ekdal! Look at the child!

HIALMAR. I will not! I cannot! I must get out — away from all this!

[*He tears himself away from* HEDVIG, *and goes out by the passage door*]

HEDVIG [*with despairing eyes*]. He is going away from us, mother! He is going away from us! He will never come back again!

GINA. Don't cry, Hedvig. Father's sure to come back again.

HEDVIG [*throws herself sobbing on the sofa*]. No, no, he'll never come home to us any more.

GREGERS. Do you believe I meant all for the best, Mrs. Ekdal?

GINA. Yes, I daresay you did; but God forgive you, all the same.

HEDVIG [*lying on the sofa*]. Oh, this will kill me! What have I done to him? Mother, you must fetch him home again!

GINA. Yes yes yes; only be quiet, and I'll go out and look for him. [*Puts on her outdoor things*] Perhaps he's gone in to Relling's. But you mustn't lie there and cry. Promise me!

HEDVIG [*weeping convulsively*]. Yes, I'll stop, I'll stop; if only father comes back!

GREGERS [*to* GINA, *who is going*] After all, had you not better leave him to fight out his bitter fight to the end?

GINA. Oh, he can do that afterwards. First of all, we must get the child quieted.

[*Goes out by the passage door*]

HEDVIG [*sits up and dries her tears*]. Now you must tell me what all this means. Why doesn't father want me any more?

GREGERS. You mustn't ask that till you are a big girl — quite grown-up.

HEDVIG [*sobs*]. But I can't go on being as miserable as this till I'm grown-up. — I think I know what it is. — Perhaps I'm not really father's child.

GREGERS [*uneasily*]. How could that be?

HEDVIG. Mother might have found me. And perhaps father has just got to know it; I've read of such things.

GREGERS. Well, but if it were so ——

HEDVIG. I think he might be just as fond of me for all that. Yes, fonder almost. We got the wild duck in a present, you know, and I love it so dearly all the same.

GREGERS [*turning the conversation*]. Ah, the wild duck, by-the-bye! Let us talk about the wild duck a little, Hedvig.

HEDVIG. The poor wild duck! He doesn't want to see it any more either. Only think, he wanted to wring its neck!

GREGERS. Oh, he won't do that.

HEDVIG. No; but he said he would like to. And I think it was horrid of father to say it; for I pray for the wild duck every night, and ask that it may be preserved from death and all that is evil.

GREGERS [*looking at her*]. Do you say your prayers every night?

HEDVIG. Yes.

GREGERS. Who taught you to do that?

HEDVIG. I myself; one time when father was very ill, and had leeches on his neck, and said that death was staring him in the face.

GREGERS. Well?

HEDVIG. Then I prayed for him as I lay in bed; and since then I have always kept it up.

GREGERS. And now you pray for the wild duck too?

HEDVIG. I thought it was best to bring in the wild duck; for she was so weakly at first.

GREGERS. Do you pray in the morning, too?

HEDVIG. No, of course not.

GREGERS. Why not in the morning as well?

HEDVIG. In the morning it's light, you know, and there's nothing in particular to be afraid of.

GREGERS. And your father was going to wring the neck of the wild duck that you love so dearly?

HEDVIG. No; he said he ought to wring its neck, but he would spare it for my sake; and that was kind of father.

GREGERS [*coming a little nearer*]. But suppose you were to sacrifice the wild duck of your own free will for his sake.

HEDVIG [*rising*]. The wild duck!

GREGERS. Suppose you were to make a free-will offering, for his sake, of the dearest treasure you have in the world!

HEDVIG. Do you think that would do any good?

GREGERS. Try it, Hedvig.

HEDVIG [*softly, with flashing eyes*]. Yes, I will try it.

GREGERS. Have you really the courage for it, do you think?

HEDVIG. I'll ask grandfather to shoot the wild duck for me.

GREGERS. Yes, do. But not a word to your mother about it.

HEDVIG. Why not?

GREGERS. She doesn't understand us.

HEDVIG. The wild duck! I'll try it to-morrow morning.

[GINA *comes in by the passage door*]

HEDVIG [*going towards her*]. Did you find him, mother?

GINA. No, but I heard as he had called and taken Relling with him.

GREGERS. Are you sure of that?

GINA. Yes, the porter's wife said so. Molvik went with them too, she said.

GREGERS. This evening, when his mind so sorely needs to wrestle in solitude ——!

GINA [*takes off her things*]. Yes, men are strange creatures, so they are. The Lord only knows where Relling has dragged him to! I ran over to Madam Eriksen's, but they weren't there.

HEDVIG [*struggling to keep back her tears*]. Oh, if he should never come home any more!

GREGERS. He will come home again. I shall have news to give him to-morrow; and then you shall see how he comes home. You may rely upon that, Hedvig, and sleep in peace. Good night.

[*He goes out by the passage door*]

HEDVIG [*throws herself sobbing on* GINA'S *neck*]. Mother, mother!

GINA [*pats her shoulder and sighs*].

Ah yes; Relling was right, he was. That's what comes of it when crazy creatures go about presenting the claims of the — what-you-may-call-it.

ACT V

HIALMAR EKDAL'S *studio. Cold, grey morning light. Wet snow lies upon the large panes of the sloping roof-window.*

GINA *comes from the kitchen with an apron and bib on, and carrying a dusting-brush and a duster; she goes towards the sitting-room door. At the same moment* HEDVIG *comes hurriedly in from the passage.*

GINA [*stops*]. Well?

HEDVIG. Oh, mother, I almost think he's down at Relling's ——

GINA. There, you see!

HEDVIG. —— because the porter's wife says she could hear that Relling had two people with him when he came home last night.

GINA. That's just what I thought.

HEDVIG. But it's no use his being there, if he won't come up to us.

GINA. I'll go down and speak to him at all events.

[OLD EKDAL, *in dressing-gown and slippers, and with a lighted pipe, appears at the door of his room*]

EKDAL. Hialmar —— Isn't Hialmar at home?

GINA. No, he's gone out.

EKDAL. So early? And in such a tearing snowstorm? Well well; just as he pleases; I can take my morning walk alone.

[*He slides the garret door aside;* HEDVIG *helps him; he goes in; she closes it after him*]

HEDVIG [*in an undertone*]. Only think, mother, when poor grandfather hears that father is going to leave us.

GINA. Oh, nonsense; grandfather mustn't hear anything about it. It was a heaven's mercy he wasn't at home yesterday in all that hurly-burly.

HEDVIG. Yes, but ——

[GREGERS *comes in by the passage door*]

GREGERS. Well, have you any news of him?

GINA. They say he's down at Relling's.

GREGERS. At Relling's! Has he really been out with those creatures?

GINA. Yes, like enough.

GREGERS. When he ought to have been yearning for solitude, to collect and clear his thoughts ——

GINA. Yes, you may well say so.

[RELLING *enters from the passage*]

HEDVIG [*going to him*]. Is father in your room?

GINA [*at the same time*]. Is he there?

RELLING. Yes, to be sure he is.

HEDVIG. And you never let us know!

RELLING. Yes; I'm a brute. But in the first place I had to look after the other brute; I mean our dæmonic friend, of course; and then I fell so dead asleep that ——

GINA. What does Ekdal say to-day?

RELLING. He says nothing whatever.

HEDVIG. Doesn't he speak?

RELLING. Not a blessed word.

GREGERS. No, no; I can understand that very well.

GINA. But what's he doing then?

RELLING. He's lying on the sofa, snoring.

GINA. Oh is he? Yes, Ekdal's a rare one to snore.

HEDVIG. Asleep? Can he sleep?

RELLING. Well, it certainly looks like it.

GREGERS. No wonder, after the spiritual conflict that has rent him ——

GINA. And then he's never been used to gadding about out of doors at night.

HEDVIG. Perhaps it's a good thing that he's getting sleep, mother.

GINA. Of course it is; and we must take care we don't wake him up too early. Thank you, Relling. I must get the house cleaned up a bit now, and then —— Come and help me, Hedvig.

[GINA *and* HEDVIG *go into the sitting-room*]

GREGERS [*turning to* RELLING]. What is your explanation of the spiritual tumult that is now going on in Hialmar Ekdal?

RELLING. Devil a bit of a spiritual tumult have *I* noticed in him.

GREGERS. What! Not at such a crisis, when his whole life has been placed on a new foundation ——? How can you think that such an individuality as Hialmar's ——?

RELLING. Oh, individuality — he!

If he ever had any tendency to the abnormal developments you call individuality, I can assure you it was rooted out of him while he was still in his teens.

GREGERS. That would be strange indeed, — considering the loving care with which he was brought up.

RELLING. By those two high-flown, hysterical maiden aunts, you mean?

GREGERS. Let me tell you that they were women who never forgot the claim of the ideal — but of course you will only jeer at me again.

RELLING. No, I'm in no humour for that. I know all about those ladies; for he has ladled out no end of rhetoric on the subject of his "two soul-mothers." But I don't think he has much to thank them for. Ekdal's misfortune is that in his own circle he has always been looked upon as a shining light ——

GREGERS. Not without reason, surely. Look at the depth of his mind!

RELLING. *I* have never discovered it. That his father believed in it I don't so much wonder; the old lieutenant has been an ass all his days.

GREGERS. He has had a child-like mind all his days; that is what you cannot understand.

RELLING. Well, so be it. But then, when our dear, sweet Hialmar went to college, he at once passed for the great light of the future amongst his comrades too! He was handsome, the rascal — red and white — a shop-girl's dream of manly beauty; and with his superficially emotional temperament, and his sympathetic voice, and his talent for declaiming other people's verses and other people's thoughts ——

GREGERS [*indignantly*]. Is it Hialmar Ekdal you are talking about in this strain?

RELLING. Yes, with your permission; I am simply giving you an inside view of the idol you are grovelling before.

GREGERS. I should hardly have thought I was quite stone blind.

RELLING. Yes, you are — or not far from it. You are a sick man, too, you see.

GREGERS. You are right there.

RELLING. Yes. Yours is a complicated case. First of all there is that plaguy integrity-fever; and then — what's worse — you are always in a delirium of hero-worship; you must always have something to adore, outside yourself.

GREGERS. Yes, I must certainly seek it outside myself.

RELLING. But you make such shocking mistakes about every new phœnix you think you have discovered. Here again you have come to a cotter's cabin with your claim of the ideal; and the people of the house are insolvent.

GREGERS. If you don't think better than that of Hialmar Ekdal, what pleasure can you find in being everlastingly with him?

RELLING. Well, you see, I'm supposed to be a sort of a doctor — save the mark! I can't but give a hand to the poor sick folk who live under the same roof with me.

GREGERS. Oh, indeed! Hialmar Ekdal is sick too, is he!

RELLING. Most people are, worse luck.

GREGERS. And what remedy are you applying in Hialmar's case?

RELLING. My usual one. I am cultivating the life-illusion [1] in him.

GREGERS. Life — illusion? I didn't catch what you said.

RELLING. Yes, I said illusion. For illusion, you know, is the stimulating principle.

GREGERS. May I ask with what illusion Hialmar is inoculated?

RELLING. No, thank you; I don't betray professional secrets to quacksalvers. You would probably go and muddle his case still more than you have already. But my method is infallible. I have applied it to Molvik as well. I have made him "dæmonic." That's the blister I have to put on his neck.

GREGERS. Is he not really dæmonic then?

RELLING. What the devil do you mean by dæmonic! It's only a piece of gibberish I've invented to keep up a spark of life in him. But for that, the poor harmless creature would have succumbed to self-contempt and despair many a long year ago. And then the old lieutenant! But he has hit upon his own cure, you see.

GREGERS. Lieutenant Ekdal? What of him?

RELLING. Just think of the old bear-hunter shutting himself up in that dark garret to shoot rabbits! I

[1] "Livslögnen," literally "the life-lie."

tell you there is not a happier sportsman in the world than that old man pottering about in there among all that rubbish. The four or five withered Christmas-trees he has saved up are the same to him as the whole great fresh Höidal forest; the cock and the hens are big game-birds in the fir-tops; and the rabbits that flop about the garret floor are the bears he has to battle with — the mighty hunter of the mountains!

GREGERS. Poor unfortunate old man! Yes; he has indeed had to narrow the ideals of his youth.

RELLING. While I think of it, Mr. Werle, junior — don't use that foreign word: ideals. We have the excellent native word: lies.

GREGERS. Do you think the two things are related?

RELLING. Yes, just about as closely as typhus and putrid fever.

GREGERS. Dr. Relling, I shall not give up the struggle until I have rescued Hialmar from your clutches!

RELLING. So much the worse for him. Rob the average man of his life-illusion, and you rob him of his happiness at the same stroke. [*To* HEDVIG, *who comes in from the sitting-room*] Well, little wild-duck-mother, I'm just going down to see whether papa is still lying meditating upon that wonderful invention of his.

[*Goes out by the passage door*]

GREGERS [*approaches* HEDVIG]. I can see by your face that you have not yet done it.

HEDVIG. What? Oh, that about the wild duck! No.

GREGERS. I suppose your courage failed when the time came.

HEDVIG. No, that wasn't it. But when I awoke this morning and remembered what we had been talking about, it seemed so strange.

GREGERS. Strange?

HEDVIG. Yes, I don't know ——. Yesterday evening, at the moment, I thought there was something so delightful about it; but since I have slept and thought of it again, it somehow doesn't seem worth while.

GREGERS. Ah, I thought you could not have grown up quite unharmed in this house.

HEDVIG. I don't care about that, if only father would come up ——

GREGERS. Oh, if only your eyes had been opened to that which gives life its value — if you possessed the true, joyous, fearless spirit of sacrifice, you would soon see how he would come up to you. — But I believe in you still, Hedvig.

[*He goes out by the passage door*]

[HEDVIG *wanders about the room for a time; she is on the point of going into the kitchen when a knock is heard at the garret door.* HEDVIG *goes over and opens it a little;* OLD EKDAL *comes out; she pushes the door to again*]

EKDAL. H'm, it's not much fun to take one's morning walk alone.

HEDVIG. Wouldn't you like to go shooting, grandfather?

EKDAL. It's not the weather for it to-day. It's so dark there, you can scarcely see where you're going.

HEDVIG. Do you never want to shoot anything besides the rabbits?

EKDAL. Do you think the rabbits aren't good enough?

HEDVIG. Yes, but what about the wild duck?

EKDAL. Ho-ho! are you afraid I shall shoot your wild duck? Never in the world. Never.

HEDVIG. No, I suppose you couldn't; they say it's very difficult to shoot wild ducks.

EKDAL. Couldn't! Should rather think I could.

HEDVIG. How would you set about it, grandfather? — I don't mean with my wild duck, but with others?

EKDAL. I should take care to shoot them in the breast, you know; that's the surest place. And then you must shoot against the feathers, you see — not the way of the feathers.

HEDVIG. Do they die then, grandfather?

EKDAL. Yes, they die right enough — when you shoot properly. Well, I must go and brush up a bit. H'm — understand — h'm.

[*Goes into his room*]

[HEDVIG *waits a little, glances towards the sitting-room door, goes over to the bookcase, stands on tip-toe, takes the double-barrelled pistol down from the shelf, and looks at it.* GINA, *with brush and duster, comes from the sitting-room.* HEDVIG *hastily lays down the pistol, unobserved*]

GINA. Don't stand raking amongst father's things, Hedvig.

HEDVIG [*goes away from the bookcase*]. I was only going to tidy up a little.

GINA. You'd better go into the kitchen, and see if the coffee's keeping hot; I'll take his breakfast on a tray, when I go down to him.

[HEDVIG *goes out.* GINA *begins to sweep and clean up the studio. Presently the passage door is opened with hesitation, and* HIALMAR EKDAL *looks in. He has on his overcoat, but not his hat; he is unwashed, and his hair is dishevelled and unkempt. His eyes are dull and heavy*]

GINA [*standing with the brush in her hand, and looking at him*]. Oh, there now, Ekdal — so you've come after all?

HIALMAR [*comes in and answers in a toneless voice*]. I come — only to depart again immediately.

GINA. Yes, yes, I suppose so. But, Lord help us! what a sight you are!

HIALMAR. A sight?

GINA. And your nice winter coat too! Well, that's done for.

HEDVIG [*at the kitchen door*]. Mother, hadn't I better ——? [*Sees* HIALMAR, *gives a loud scream of joy, and runs to him*]. Oh, father, father!

HIALMAR [*turns away and makes a gesture of repulsion*]. Away, away, away! [*To* GINA] Keep her away from me, I say!

GINA [*in a low tone*]. Go into the sitting-room, Hedvig.

[HEDVIG *does so without a word*]

HIALMAR [*fussily pulls out the table-drawer*]. I must have my books with me. Where are my books?

GINA. Which books?

HIALMAR. My scientific books, of course; the technical magazines I require for my invention.

GINA [*searches in the bookcase*]. Is it these here paper-covered ones?

HIALMAR. Yes, of course.

GINA [*lays a heap of magazines on the table*]. Sha'n't I get Hedvig to cut them for you?

HIALMAR. I don't require to have them cut for me.

[*Short silence*]

GINA. Then you're still set on leaving us, Ekdal?

HIALMAR [*rummaging amongst the books*]. Yes, that is a matter of course, I should think.

GINA. Well, well.

HIALMAR [*vehemently*]. How can I live here, to be stabbed to the heart every hour of the day?

GINA. God forgive you for thinking such vile things of me.

HIALMAR. Prove ——!

GINA. I think it's you as has got to prove.

HIALMAR. After a past like yours? There are certain claims — I may almost call them claims of the ideal ——

GINA. But what about grandfather? What's to become of him, poor dear?

HIALMAR. I know my duty; my helpless father will come with me. I am going out into the town to make arrangements ——. H'm — [*hesitatingly*] has any one found my hat on the stairs?

GINA. No. Have you lost your hat?

HIALMAR. Of course I had it on when I came in last night; there's no doubt about that; but I couldn't find it this morning.

GINA. Lord help us! where have you been to with those two ne'er-do-weels?

HIALMAR. Oh, don't bother me about trifles. Do you suppose I am in the mood to remember details?

GINA. If only you haven't caught cold, Ekdal.

[*Goes out into the kitchen*]

HIALMAR [*talks to himself in a low tone of irritation, whilst he empties the table-drawer*]. You're a scoundrel, Relling! — You're a low fellow! — Ah, you shameless tempter! — I wish I could get some one to stick a knife into you!

[*He lays some old letters on one side, finds the torn document of yesterday, takes it up and looks at the pieces; puts it down hurriedly as* GINA *enters*]

GINA [*sets a tray with coffee, etc., on the table*]. Here's a drop of something hot, if you'd fancy it. And there's some bread and butter and a snack of salt meat.

HIALMAR [*glancing at the tray*]. Salt meat? Never under this roof! It's true I have not had a mouthful of solid food for nearly twenty-four hours; but no matter. — My memoranda! The commencement of my autobiography! What has become of my diary, and all my important papers? [*Opens the sitting-room door but draws back*] She is there too!

GINA. Good Lord! the child must be somewhere!

HIALMAR. Come out.

[*He makes room;* HEDVIG *comes, scared, into the studio*]

HIALMAR [*with his hand upon the door-handle, says to* GINA]: In these, the last moments I spend in my former home, I wish to be spared from interlopers ——

[*Goes into the room*]

HEDVIG [*with a bound towards her mother, asks softly, trembling*]. Does that mean me?

GINA. Stay out in the kitchen, Hedvig; or, no — you'd best go into your own room. [*Speaks to* HIALMAR *as she goes in to him*] Wait a bit, Ekdal; don't rummage so in the drawers; *I* know where everything is.

HEDVIG [*stands a moment immovable, in terror and perplexity, biting her lips to keep back the tears; then she clenches her hands convulsively, and says softly*]. The wild duck.

[*She steals over and takes the pistol from the shelf, opens the garret door a little way, creeps in, and draws the door to after her*]

[HIALMAR *and* GINA *can be heard disputing in the sitting-room*]

HIALMAR [*comes in with some manuscript books and old loose papers, which he lays upon the table*]. That portmanteau is of no use! There are a thousand and one things I must drag with me.

GINA [*following with the portmanteau*]. Why not leave all the rest for the present, and only take a shirt and a pair of woollen drawers with you?

HIALMAR. Whew! — all these exhausting preparations ——!

[*Pulls off his overcoat and throws it upon the sofa*]

GINA. And there's the coffee getting cold.

HIALMAR. H'm.

[*Drinks a mouthful without thinking of it, and then another*]

GINA [*dusting the backs of the chairs*]. A nice job you'll have to find such another big garret for the rabbits.

HIALMAR. What! Am I to drag all those rabbits with me too?

GINA. You don't suppose grandfather can get on without his rabbits.

HIALMAR. He must just get used to doing without them. Have not *I* to sacrifice very much greater things than rabbits!

GINA [*dusting the bookcase*]. Shall I put the flute in the portmanteau for you?

HIALMAR. No. No flute for me. But give me the pistol!

GINA. Do you want to take the pigstol with you?

HIALMAR. Yes. My loaded pistol.

GINA [*searching for it*]. It's gone. He must have taken it in with him.

HIALMAR. Is he in the garret?

GINA. Yes, of course he's in the garret.

HIALMAR. H'm — poor lonely old man.

[*He takes a piece of bread and butter, eats it, and finishes his cup of coffee*]

GINA. If we hadn't have let that room, you could have moved in there.

HIALMAR. And continued to live under the same roof with ——! Never, — never!

GINA. But couldn't you put up with the sitting-room for a day or two? You could have it all to yourself.

HIALMAR. Never within these walls!

GINA. Well then, down with Relling and Molvik.

HIALMAR. Don't mention those wretches' names to me! The very thought of them almost takes away my appetite. — Oh no, I must go out into the storm and the snow-drift, — go from house to house and seek shelter for my father and myself.

GINA. But you've got no hat, Ekdal! You've been and lost your hat, you know.

HIALMAR. Oh those two brutes, those slaves of all the vices! A hat must be procured. [*Takes another piece of bread and butter*] Some arrangement must be made. For I have no mind to throw away my life, either.

[*Looks for something on the tray*]

GINA. What are you looking for?

HIALMAR. Butter.

GINA. I'll get some at once.

[*Goes out into the kitchen*]

HIALMAR [*calls after her*]. Oh it doesn't matter; dry bread is good enough for me.

GINA [*brings a dish of butter*]. Look here; this is fresh churned.

[*She pours out another cup of coffee for him; he seats himself on the sofa, spreads more butter on the already buttered bread, and eats and drinks awhile in silence*]

HIALMAR. Could I, without being subject to intrusion — intrusion of any sort — could I live in the sitting-room there for a day or two?

GINA. Yes, to be sure you could, if you only would.

HIALMAR. For I see no possibility of getting all father's things out in such a hurry.

GINA. And besides, you've surely got to tell him first as you don't mean to live with us others no more.

HIALMAR [*pushes away his coffee cup*]. Yes, there is that too; I shall have to lay bare the whole tangled story to him ——. I must turn matters over; I must have breathing-time; I cannot take all these burdens on my shoulders in a single day.

GINA. No, especially in such horrible weather as it is outside.

HIALMAR [*touching* WERLE'S *letter*]. I see that paper is still lying about here.

GINA. Yes, *I* haven't touched it.

HIALMAR. So far as I am concerned it is mere waste paper ——

GINA. Well, *I* have certainly no notion of making any use of it.

HIALMAR. —— but we had better not let it get lost all the same; — in all the upset when I move, it might easily ——

GINA. I'll take good care of it, Ekdal.

HIALMAR. The donation is in the first instance made to father, and it rests with him to accept or decline it.

GINA [*sighs*]. Yes, poor old father ——

HIALMAR. To make quite safe —— Where shall I find some gum?

GINA [*goes to the bookcase*]. Here's the gum-pot.

HIALMAR. And a brush?

GINA. The brush is here too.

[*Brings him the things*]

HIALMAR [*takes a pair of scissors*]. Just a strip of paper at the back —— [*Clips and gums*] Far be it from me to lay hands upon what is not my own — and least of all upon what belongs to a destitute old man — and to — the other as well. — There now. Let it lie there for a time; and when it is dry, take it away. I wish never to see that document again. Never!

[GREGERS WERLE *enters from the passage*]

GREGERS [*somewhat surprised*]. What, — are you sitting here, Hialmar?

HIALMAR [*rises hurriedly*]. I had sunk down from fatigue.

GREGERS. You have been having breakfast, I see.

HIALMAR. The body sometimes makes its claims felt too.

GREGERS. What have you decided to do?

HIALMAR. For a man like me, there is only one course possible. I am just putting my most important things together. But it takes time, you know.

GINA [*with a touch of impatience*]. Am I to get the room ready for you, or am I to pack your portmanteau?

HIALMAR [*after a glance of annoyance at* GREGERS]. Pack — and get the room ready!

GINA [*takes the portmanteau*]. Very well; then I'll put in the shirt and the other things.

[*Goes into the sitting-room and draws the door to after her*]

GREGERS [*after a short silence*]. I never dreamed that this would be the end of it. Do you really feel it a necessity to leave house and home?

HIALMAR [*wanders about restlessly*]. What would you have me do? — I am not fitted to bear unhappiness, Gregers. I must feel secure and at peace in my surroundings.

GREGERS. But can you not feel that here? Just try it. I should have thought you had firm ground to build upon now — if only you start afresh. And remember, you have your invention to live for.

HIALMAR. Oh don't talk about my invention. It's perhaps still in the dim distance.

GREGERS. Indeed!

HIALMAR. Why, great heavens, what would you have me invent? Other people have invented almost everything already. It becomes more and more difficult every day ——

GREGERS. And you have devoted so much labour to it.

HIALMAR. It was that blackguard Relling that urged me to it.

GREGERS. Relling?

HIALMAR. Yes, it was he that first made me realise my aptitude for making some notable discovery in photography.

GREGERS. Aha — it was Relling!

HIALMAR. Oh, I have been so truly happy over it! Not so much for the sake of the invention itself, as because Hedvig believed in it — believed in it with a child's whole eagerness of faith. — At least, I have been fool enough to go and imagine that she believed in it.

GREGERS. Can you really think that Hedvig has been false towards you?

HIALMAR. I can think anything now. It is Hedvig that stands in my way. She will blot out the sunlight from my whole life.

GREGERS. Hedvig! Is it Hedvig you are talking of? How should she blot out your sunlight?

HIALMAR [*without answering*]. How unutterably I have loved that child! How unutterably happy I have felt every time I came home to my humble room, and she flew to meet me, with her sweet little blinking eyes. Oh, confiding fool that I have been! I loved her unutterably; — and I yielded myself up to the dream, the delusion, that she loved me unutterably in return.

GREGERS. Do you call that a delusion?

HIALMAR. How should I know? I can get nothing out of Gina; and besides, she is totally blind to the ideal side of these complications. But to you I feel impelled to open my mind, Gregers. I cannot shake off this frightful doubt — perhaps Hedvig has never really and honestly loved me.

GREGERS. What would you say if she were to give you a proof of her love? [*Listens*] What's that? I thought I heard the wild duck ——?

HIALMAR. It's the wild duck quacking. Father's in the garret.

GREGERS. Is he? [*His face lights up with joy*] I say you may yet have proof that your poor misunderstood Hedvig loves you!

HIALMAR. Oh, what proof can she give me? I dare not believe in any assurances from that quarter.

GREGERS. Hedvig does not know what deceit means.

HIALMAR. Oh Gregers, that is just what I cannot be sure of. Who knows what Gina and that Mrs. Sörby may many a time have sat here whispering and tattling about? And Hedvig usually has her ears open, I can tell you. Perhaps the deed of gift was not such a surprise to her, after all. In fact, I'm not sure but that I noticed something of the sort.

GREGERS. What spirit is this that has taken possession of you?

HIALMAR. I have had my eyes opened. Just you notice; — you'll see, the deed of gift is only a beginning. Mrs. Sörby has always been a good deal taken up with Hedvig; and now she has the power to do whatever she likes for the child. They can take her from me whenever they please.

GREGERS. Hedvig will never, never leave you.

HIALMAR. Don't be so sure of that. If only they beckon to her and throw out a golden bait ——! And oh! I have loved her so unspeakably! I would have counted it my highest happiness to take her tenderly by the hand and lead her, as one leads a timid child through a great, dark, empty room! — I am cruelly certain now that the poor photographer in his humble attic has never really and truly been anything to her. She has only cunningly contrived to keep on a good footing with him until the time came.

GREGERS. You don't believe that yourself, Hialmar.

HIALMAR. That is just the terrible part of it — I don't know what to believe, — I never can know it. But can you really doubt that it must be as I say? Ho-ho, you have far too much faith in the claim of the ideal, my good Gregers! If those others came, with the glamour of wealth about them, and called to the child: — "Leave him: come to us: here life awaits you ——!"

GREGERS [*quickly*]. Well, what then?

HIALMAR. If I then asked her: Hedvig, are *you* willing to renounce that life for me? [*Laughs scornfully*] No thank you! You would soon hear what answer I should get.

[*A pistol shot is heard from within the garret*]

GREGERS [*loudly and joyfully*]. Hialmar!

HIALMAR. There now; he must needs go shooting too.

GINA [*comes in*]. Oh Ekdal, I can hear grandfather blazing away in the garret by hisself.

HIALMAR. I'll look in ——

GREGERS [*eagerly, with emotion*]. Wait a moment! Do you know what that was?

HIALMAR. Yes, of course I know.

GREGERS. No, you don't know. But *I* do. That was the proof!

HIALMAR. What proof?

GREGERS. It was a child's free-will offering. She has got your father to shoot the wild duck.

HIALMAR. To shoot the wild duck!

GINA. Oh, think of that ——!

HIALMAR. What was that for?

GREGERS. She wanted to sacrifice to you her most cherished possession; for then she thought you would surely come to love her again.

HIALMAR [*tenderly, with emotion*]. Oh, poor child!

GINA. What things she does think of!

GREGERS. She only wanted your love again, Hialmar. She could not live without it.

GINA [*struggling with her tears*]. There, you can see for yourself, Ekdal.

HIALMAR. Gina, where is she?

GINA [*sniffs*]. Poor dear, she's sitting out in the kitchen, I dare say.

HIALMAR [*goes over, tears open the kitchen door, and says*]: Hedvig, come, come in to me! [*Looks round*] No, she's not here.

GINA. Then she must be in her own little room.

HIALMAR [*without*]. No, she's not here either. [*Comes in*] She must have gone out.

GINA. Yes, you wouldn't have her anywheres in the house.

HIALMAR. Oh, if she would only come home quickly, so that I can tell her —— Everything will come right now, Gregers; now I believe we can begin life afresh.

GREGERS [*quietly*]. I knew it; I knew the child would make amends.

[OLD EKDAL *appears at the door of his room; he is in full uniform, and is busy buckling on his sword*]

HIALMAR [*astonished*]. Father! Are you there?

GINA. Have you been firing in your room?

EKDAL [*resentfully, approaching*]. So you go shooting alone, do you, Hialmar?

HIALMAR [*excited and confused*]. Then it wasn't you that fired that shot in the garret?

EKDAL. Me that fired? H'm.

GREGERS [*calls out to* HIALMAR]. She has shot the wild duck herself!

HIALMAR. What can it mean? [*Hastens to the garret door, tears it aside, looks in and calls loudly*] Hedvig!

GINA [*runs to the door*]. Good God, what's that!

HIALMAR [*goes in*]. She's lying on the floor!

GREGERS. Hedvig! lying on the floor!

[*Goes in to* HIALMAR]

GINA [*at the same time*]. Hedvig! [*Inside the garret*] No, no, no!

EKDAL. Ho-ho! does she go shooting too, now?

[HIALMAR, GINA, *and* GREGERS *carry* HEDVIG *into the studio; in her dangling right hand she holds the pistol fast clasped in her fingers*]

HIALMAR [*distracted*]. The pistol has gone off. She has wounded herself. Call for help! Help!

GINA [*runs into the passage and calls down*]. Relling! Relling! Doctor Relling; come up as quick as you can!

[HIALMAR *and* GREGERS *lay* HEDVIG *down on the sofa*]

EKDAL [*quietly*]. The woods avenge themselves.

HIALMAR [*on his knees beside* HEDVIG]. She'll soon come to now. She's coming to ——; yes, yes, yes.

GINA [*who has come in again*]. Where has she hurt herself? I can't see anything ——

[RELLING *comes hurriedly, and immediately after him* MOLVIK; *the latter without his waistcoat and necktie, and with his coat open*]

RELLING. What's the matter here?

GINA. They say Hedvig has shot herself.

HIALMAR. Come and help us!

RELLING. Shot herself!

[*He pushes the table aside and begins to examine her*]

HIALMAR [*kneeling and looking anxiously up at him*]. It can't be dangerous? Speak, Relling! She is scarcely bleeding at all. It can't be dangerous?

RELLING. How did it happen?

HIALMAR. Oh, we don't know ——!

GINA. She wanted to shoot the wild duck.

RELLING. The wild duck?

HIALMAR. The pistol must have gone off.

RELLING. H'm. Indeed.

EKDAL. The woods avenge themselves. But I'm not afraid, all the same.

[*Goes into the garret and closes the door after him*]

HIALMAR. Well, Relling, — why don't you say something?

RELLING. The ball has entered the breast.

HIALMAR. Yes, but she's coming to!

RELLING. Surely you can see that Hedvig is dead.

GINA [*bursts into tears*]. Oh my child, my child!

GREGERS [*huskily*]. In the depths of the sea ——

HIALMAR [*jumps up*]. No, no, she must live! Oh, for God's sake, Relling — only a moment — only just till I can tell her how unspeakably I loved her all the time!

RELLING. The bullet has gone through her heart. Internal hemorrhage. Death must have been instantaneous.

HIALMAR. And I! I hunted her from me like an animal! And she crept terrified into the garret and died for love of me! [*Sobbing*] I can never atone to her! I can never tell her ——! [*Clenches his hands and cries, upwards*] O thou above ——! If thou be indeed! Why hast thou done this thing to me?

GINA. Hush, hush, you mustn't go on that awful way. We had no right to keep her, I suppose.

MOLVIK. The child is not dead, but sleepeth.

RELLING. Bosh!

HIALMAR [*becomes calm, goes over to the sofa, folds his arms, and looks at* HEDVIG]. There she lies so stiff and still.

RELLING [*tries to loosen the pistol*]. She's holding it so tight, so tight.

GINA. No, no, Relling, don't break her fingers; let the pigstol be.

HIALMAR. She shall take it with her.

GINA. Yes, let her. But the child mustn't lie here for a show. She shall go to her own room, so she shall. Help me, Ekdal.

[HIALMAR *and* GINA *take* HEDVIG *between them*]

HIALMAR [*as they are carrying her*]. Oh Gina, Gina, can you survive this!

GINA. We must help each other to bear it. For now at least she belongs to both of us.

MOLVIK [*stretches out his arms and mumbles*]. Blessed be the Lord; to earth thou shalt return; to earth thou shalt return ——

RELLING [*whispers*]. Hold your tongue, you fool; you're drunk.

[HIALMAR *and* GINA *carry the body out through the kitchen door.* RELLING *shuts it after them.* MOLVIK *slinks out into the passage*]

RELLING [*goes over to* GREGERS *and says*]: No one shall ever convince me that the pistol went off by accident.

GREGERS [*who has stood terrified, with convulsive twitchings*]. Who can say how the dreadful thing happened?

RELLING. The powder has burnt the body of her dress. She must have pressed the pistol right against her breast and fired.

GREGERS. Hedvig has not died in vain. Did you not see how sorrow set free what is noble in him?

RELLING. Most people are ennobled by the actual presence of death. But how long do you suppose this nobility will last in him?

GREGERS. Why should it not endure and increase throughout his life?

RELLING. Before a year is over, little Hedvig will be nothing to him but a pretty theme for declamation.

GREGERS. How dare you say that of Hialmar Ekdal?

RELLING. We will talk of this again, when the grass has first withered on her grave. Then you'll hear him spouting about "the child too early torn from her father's heart"; then you'll see him steep himself in a syrup of sentiment and self-admiration and self-pity. Just you wait!

GREGERS. If you are right and I am wrong, then life is not worth living.

RELLING. Oh, life would be quite tolerable, after all, if only we could be rid of the confounded duns that keep on pestering us, in our poverty, with the claim of the ideal.

GREGERS [*looking straight before him*]. In that case, I am glad that my destiny is what it is.

RELLING. May I inquire, — what is your destiny?

GREGERS [*going*]. To be the thirteenth at table.

RELLING. The devil it is.

THE END

THE LONELY WAY

(*1903*)

By Arthur Schnitzler

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER AND "THE LONELY WAY"

Schnitzler and Strindberg are the two dramatists who challenge most in the period of modern drama covered by this anthology. Just as one receives a hint of dramatic theory in Strindberg's preface to Björkman's translation of "Miss Julia"; just as Henry Bataille in *Les Annales* (Number 1536, Paris) discusses "style" in drama, so there is much still untranslated of Schnitzler's which will eventually throw light on the manner in which he reaches the high polish of his dialogue, the philosophy of his art.

There is more than the drama form to be studied in Strindberg and Schnitzler: the novel comes into consideration, as it does in the instances of D'Annunzio and Sudermann and Hauptmann. Critics deplored the brutality of Becque, but his brutality pales before Wedekind; critics wondered at the cynicism of Donnay, but it is slim by the side of the Viennese subtleties of Schnitzler. It is worth while to contrast the cynicism of Wedekind with that of Andreyev; the lightness of touch in Schnitzler with the deftness of the French. There is no more suggestive contrast than Schnitzler's "Countess Mizzie" and Wedekind's "The Court Singer." And in passing it is worth noting that as a physician, Tchekhoff made use of his experience in the same way that Schnitzler, as a specialist, makes use of his. Schnitzler is the product of Viennese life, and through the slant of Viennese interest he has to be studied. He was born in 1862, the son of a throat specialist, and himself entered the medical schools, and afterwards became a writer on medical topics. Through his scientific training, he gained a psycho-analytical viewpoint which colors his entire work as a dramatist.

One may designate this work as neurotic, but it is poignantly ironic, as well. There is a flavor to Schnitzler that is distinctively Continental. He is the psychologist par excellence, and the glittering manner in which he probes to the center, while it takes from the clinical process by which he lays bare the very states which are the basis of Freudian interest, does not hide the value of his work as a positive factor in Continental drama. One has to grant much in order to see the true value of Schnitzler; he is no examiner into normal moral balances. It is necessary, first of all, to consider his training — the family interest in medicine. His father was a laryngologist. Literary history would indeed be dull if it did not closely relate the product of a writer's years with his personal experience. Some day, when the data is available, Schnitzler will thus be studied. In fact, even now, there exist deep treatises showing his value as a psychologist. As a mere practising physician, material must have come to him; his patients — mostly nervous cases — have undoubtedly suggested states of mind and situations. But after all is said, Vienna produced him; and as a son of Vienna he has been unafraid to attack current problems with trenchant touch.

Schnitzler's "Comedies of Words" and other plays have just been issued (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Company). They are translated by Pierre Loving.

"Literature" is contained in the volume — a delightful travesty on the literary life — the way in which personal experience may be used indiscriminately for vainglory. There is an illusive quality to such dialogue as one finds here, and in other plays like "The Green Cockatoo" and "Anatol." The charm of the inconsequent, the ease of the free morality held in true light by the searching intensity with which it is viewed, estimated and brought to its conclusion relentlessly, the vividness with which light touches are held in relief, as in "Anatol" — these are the essential elements in the artistry of Arthur Schnitzler. Pierre Loving writes:

"When you are dealing with a big man like Schnitzler, it is simply fatuous to attempt to pigeonhole him. Whatever else Schnitzler may do, certainly, it must be admitted, he sounds the strident note of irony, the helpless mistaking of illusion for reality, reality for illusion."

Note his old-world sophistication in "Countess Mizzie" — the over-cultivated suavity of a kind of life so typical on the Continent, so usual in Vienna — a flippant, easy life, yet so poignant, so tragic. Life is one big drama; no one loves to pull so lightly the tragic mask from the face of life as Schnitzler; no other hides so lightly as he the depth of tragedy beneath the sparkle of manner. Somewhere he has been called the dramatist of the Twilight Soul; by others he is regarded as the one artist dealing with life's essences, life's fragrances, life's colors, — but not with life directly. His dramas are based on inhibitions, brought to the fore with startling clarity and revelation. Thus his plays become confessionals for his men and women. His heartiest humor has an edge to it. The physician strips bare and so does the dramatist in his psychological treatment. But both have pity. Before one discovers in Schnitzler this pity, one has to understand those elements which constitute the very existence of Vienna.

THE LONELY WAY

DER EINSAME WEG

(*1903*)

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

By ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY
EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

PERSONS

Professor Wegrat, *President of the Academy of Plastic Arts*
Gabrielle, *his wife*
Felix, Johanna } *their children*
Julian Fichtner
Stephan von Sala
Irene Herms
Dr. Franz Reumann, *a physician*
Fichtner's Valet
Sala's Valet
A Maid at the Wegrats'

Copyright, 1915,
By LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

THE LONELY WAY

ACT I

The little garden attached to PROFESSOR WEGRAT'S *house. It is almost surrounded by buildings, so that no outlook of any kind is to be had. At the right in the garden stands the small two-storied house with its woodwork veranda, to which lead three wooden steps. Entries are made from the veranda as well as from either side of the house. Near the middle of the stage is a green garden table with chairs to match, and also a more comfortable armchair. A small iron bench is placed against a tree at the left.*

JOHANNA *is walking back and forth in the garden when* FELIX *enters, wearing the uniform of a uhlan.*

JOHANNA [*turning about*]. Felix!

FELIX. Yes, it's me.

JOHANNA. How are you? — And how have you been able to get another furlough?

FELIX. Oh, it won't last long. — And how's mamma?

JOHANNA. Doing pretty well the last few days.

FELIX. Do you think she would be scared if I dropped in on her unexpectedly.

JOHANNA. No. But wait a little just the same. She's asleep now. I have just come from her room. — How long are you going to stay, Felix?

FELIX. To-morrow night I'm off again.

JOHANNA [*staring into a fancied distance*]. Off . . .

FELIX. Oh, it sounds big! But one doesn't get so very far off — not in any respect.

JOHANNA. And you have wanted it so badly. . . . [*Pointing to his uniform*] Now you've got it. And are you not satisfied?

FELIX. Well, at any rate it is the most sensible thing I have gone into so far. For now I feel at least that I might achieve something under certain circumstances.

JOHANNA. I believe you would make good in any profession.

FELIX. I have my doubts whether I could get anywhere as a lawyer or an engineer. And on the whole I feel a good deal better than ever before. Often it seems to me as if I hadn't been born at the right time. I think I should have come into the world while there was still so much of order left in it, that one could venture all sorts of things one couldn't possibly venture nowadays.

JOHANNA. Oh, but you are free — you've got place to move.

FELIX. Only within certain limits.

JOHANNA. They are a great deal wider than these at any rate.

FELIX [*looking around with a smile*]. Well, this is not a prison. . . . Really, the garden has turned out quite pretty. How bare it looked when we were children. — What's that? A row of peach trees? That doesn't look bad at all.

JOHANNA. One of Dr. Reumann's ideas.

FELIX. Yes, I should have guessed it.

JOHANNA. Why?

FELIX. Because I can't believe any member of our family capable of such a useful inspiration. What are his chances anyhow? — I mean in regard to that professorship at Gratz?

JOHANNA. I don't know anything about it. [*She turns away*]

FELIX. I suppose mamma is outdoors a good deal these fine days?

JOHANNA. Yes.

FELIX. Are you still reading to her? Do you try to divert her a little? To cheer her up?

JOHANNA. Just as if it were such an easy thing!

FELIX. But you have to put some spunk into it, Johanna.

JOHANNA. Yes, Felix, it's easy for you to talk.

FELIX. What do you mean?

JOHANNA [*speaking as if to herself*]. I don't know if you'll be able to understand me.

FELIX [*smiling*]. Why should it all at once be so hard for me to understand you?

JOHANNA [*looking calmly at him*]. Now when she is sick, I don't love her as much as before.

FELIX [*startled*]. What?

JOHANNA. No, it's impossible that you could quite understand. All the time she is getting farther away from us. . . . It is as if every day a new set of veils dropped down about her.

FELIX. And what is the meaning of it? [JOHANNA *continues to look at him in the same calm way*] You think . . . ?

JOHANNA. You know, Felix, that I never make any mistakes in things of that kind.

FELIX. I *know*, you say . . . ?

JOHANNA. When poor litte Lillie von Sala had to die, I was aware of it in advance — before the rest of you knew that she was sick even.

FELIX. Yes, you had had a dream — and you were nothing but a child.

JOHANNA. I didn't dream it. I knew it. [*Brusquely*] It's something I can't explain.

FELIX [*after a pause*]. And papa — has he resigned himself to it?

JOHANNA. Resigned himself? — Do you think he too can see those veils coming down?

FELIX [*having first shaken his head slightly*]. Nothing but imagination, Johanna — I am sure. — But now I want to . . . [*Turning toward the house*] Papa hasn't come home yet?

JOHANNA. No. As a rule he's very late these days. He has an awful lot to do in the Academy.

FELIX. I'll try not to wake her up — I'll be careful. [*He goes out by way of the veranda*]

[*While alone for a while,* JOHANNA *seats herself on the garden bench with her hands clasped across her knees.* SALA *enters. He is forty-five, but looks younger. Slender to the verge of leanness, and smooth-shaven. His brown hair, which has begun to turn gray at the temples, and which he wears rather long, is parted on the right side. His features are keen and energetic; his eyes, gray and clear*]

SALA. Good evening, Miss Johanna.

JOHANNA. Good evening, Mr. von Sala.

SALA. They told me your mother was having a little nap, and so I permitted myself to come out here in the meantime.

JOHANNA. Felix just got here.

SALA. Well? Have they already granted him another furlough? In my days they were stricter in that regiment. However, we were then stationed near the border — somewhere in Galicia.

JOHANNA. I can never keep in mind that you have gone through that kind of thing too.

SALA. Yes, it's long ago now. And it didn't last more than a couple of years. But it was good fun as I look back at it now.

JOHANNA. Like almost everything else you have experienced.

SALA. Like much of it.

JOHANNA. Won't you sit down?

SALA. Thank you. [*He seats himself on the support of the armchair*] Am I permitted? [JOHANNA *having nodded assent, he takes a cigarette from his case and lights it*]

JOHANNA. Are you already settled in your new place, Mr. von Sala?

SALA. I move in to-morrow.

JOHANNA. And it gives you a great deal of pleasure, doesn't it?

SALA. That would be a little premature.

JOHANNA. Are you superstitious?

SALA. Well, for that matter — yes. — But that was not what I had in mind. I only take possession temporarily, not for good.

JOHANNA. Why not?

SALA. I'm going abroad — for a prolonged stay.

JOHANNA. Oh? You are to be envied. I wish I could do the same — go here and there in the world, and not bother myself about a single human being.

SALA. Still at it?

JOHANNA. Still at it. . . . What do you mean?

SALA. Oh, I recall how the same kind of schemes for traveling used to occupy your mind when you were nothing but a little girl. What was it you wanted to become? — A ballet-dancer, I think. Wasn't that it? A very famous one, of course.

JOHANNA. Why do you say that as if it were nothing at all to be a ballet dancer? [*Without looking at him*] You, in particular, Mr. von Sala, should not be talking like that.

SALA. Why not I, in particular? [JOHANNA *glances up calmly at him*] I don't quite make out what you mean, Miss Johanna. . . . Unless I must . . . [*Simply*] Johanna, did you know at the time that I was looking at you?

JOHANNA. When?

SALA. Last year, when you were in the country, and I came out once and stayed over night in your attic. It was bright moonlight, and I thought I could see a fairy gliding back and forth in the meadow.

[JOHANNA *nods with a smile*]

SALA. And it was for me?

JOHANNA. Oh, I saw you very well, where you stood behind the curtain.

SALA [*after a brief pause*]. I suppose you will never dance like that for other people?

JOHANNA. Why not? — I have already. And then, too, you were looking on. Of course, it was a good while ago. — It happened on one of the Greek islands. A large number of men stood in a circle around me . . . you were one of them . . . and I was a slave girl from Lydia.

SALA. A princess in captivity.

JOHANNA [*earnestly*]. Don't you believe in such things?

SALA. If you want me to — certainly.

JOHANNA [*still very serious*]. You should believe everything in which the rest cannot believe.

SALA. When the time comes for it, I suppose I shall.

JOHANNA. You see — I can rather believe anything than that I should now be in the world for the first time. And there are moments when I recall quite clearly all sorts of things.

SALA. And at that time you had such a moment?

JOHANNA. Yes, a year ago, when I was dancing for you in the meadow that moonlit summer night. I am sure it was not the first time, Mr. von Sala. [*After a short pause, with a sudden change of tone*] Where are you going anyhow?

SALA [*falling into the same tone*]. To Bactria, Miss Johanna.

JOHANNA. Where?

SALA. To Bactria. That's quite a remarkable country, and what's most remarkable about it is that it doesn't exist any longer. What it means is that I am joining an expedition which will start next November. You have read of it in the papers, haven't you?

JOHANNA. No.

SALA. The proposition is to make excavations where it is supposed the ancient Ecbatana stood once — some six thousand years ago. That goes even farther back than your Lydian period, you see.

JOHANNA. When did you get hold of this idea?

SALA. Only a few days ago. Conversationally, so to speak. Count Ronsky, who is at the head of the matter, inspired me with a great desire to go. That wasn't very hard, however. He stirred an old longing within me. [*With more spirit*] Think of it, Miss Johanna: to be watching with your own eyes the gradual rising of such a buried city out of the ground — house by house, stone by stone, century by century. No, it wasn't meant that I should pass away until I had had this wish of mine fulfilled.

JOHANNA. Why talk of dying then?

SALA. Is there ever a blissful moment in any decent man's life when he can think of anything else in his innermost soul?

JOHANNA. I don't suppose a single wish of yours was ever left unfulfilled.

SALA. Not a single one . . . ?

JOHANNA. I know that you have also had many sad experiences. But frequently I believe you have longed for those too.

SALA. Longed for them . . . ? You may be right, perhaps, in saying that I enjoyed them when they came.

JOHANNA. How perfectly I understand that! A life without sorrow would probably be as bare as a life without happiness. [*Pause*] How long ago is it now?

SALA. What are you thinking of?

JOHANNA. That Mrs. von Sala died?

SALA. It's seven years ago, almost to a day.

JOHANNA. And Lillie — the same year?

SALA. Yes, Lillie died a month later. Do you often think of Lillie, Miss Johanna?

JOHANNA. Quite often, Mr. von Sala. I have never had a girl friend since that time. [*As if to herself*] She too would have to be called "miss"

now. She was very pretty. She had black hair with a bluish glint in it like your wife, and the same clear eyes that you have, Mr. von Sala. [*As if to herself*] "Then both of them walked hand in hand along the gloomy road that leads through sunlit land . . ."

SALA. What a memory you have, Johanna.

JOHANNA. Seven years ago that was. . . . Remarkable!

SALA. Why remarkable?

JOHANNA. You are building a house, and digging out submerged cities, and writing queer poetry — and human beings who once meant so much to you have been rotting in their graves these seven years — and you are still almost young. How incomprehensible the whole thing is!

SALA. "Thou that livest on, cease thou thy weeping," says Omar Nameh, who was born at Bagdad in the year 412 of the Mohammedan era as the son of a cobbler. For that matter, I know a man who is only thirty-eight. He has buried two wives and seven children, not to speak of grandchildren. And now he is playing the piano in a shabby little Prater [1] restaurant, while artists of both sexes show off their tights and their fluttering skirts on the platform. And recently, when the pitiful performance had come to an end and they were turning out the lights, he went right on, without apparent reason, and quite heedless of everything, playing away on that frightful old rattle-box of his. And then Ronsky and I asked him over to our table and had a chat with him. And then he told us that the piece he had just played was his own composition. Of course, we complimented him. And then his eyes lit up, and he asked us in a voice that shook: "Gentlemen, do you think my piece will make a hit?" He is thirty-eight years old, and his career has come to an end in a small restaurant where his public consists of nurse-girls and non-commissioned officers, and his one longing is — to get their applause!

REUMANN [*enters*]. Good evening, Miss Johanna. Good evening, Mr. von Sala. [*Shakes hands with both of them at the same time*] How are you?

SALA. Fine. You don't suppose one must be your victim all the time because one has had the honor of consulting you once?

REUMANN. Oh, I had forgotten all about it. However, there are people who feel just that way. — I suppose your mother is having a little rest, Miss Johanna?

JOHANNA [*who apparently has been startled by the few words exchanged between the physician and* SALA, *and who is looking intently at the latter*]. She is probably awake by this time. Felix is with her.

REUMANN. Felix . . . ? You haven't telegraphed for him, have you?

JOHANNA. Not that I know of. Who could have . . . ?

REUMANN. I only wondered. Your father is inclined to get frightened.

JOHANNA. There they are now.

MRS. WEGRAT [*enters from the veranda with* FELIX]. How are you, my dear Doctor? What do you think of the surprise I have just had?

[*All the men shake hands*]

Good evening, Mr. von Sala.

SALA. I am delighted to see you looking so well, Mrs. Wegrat.

MRS. WEGRAT. Yes, I am doing a little better. If only the gloomy season were not so close at hand.

SALA. But now the finest time of the year is coming. When the woods sparkle with red and yellow, and a golden mist lies on the hills, and the sky grows pale and remote as if it were scared by its own infinity . . .!

MRS. WEGRAT. Yes, that ought to be worth seeing once more.

REUMANN [*reproachfully*]. Mrs. Wegrat . . .

MRS. WEGRAT. Pardon me — but thoughts of that kind will come. [*Brightening up a little*] If I only knew how much longer I might count on my dear doctor?

REUMANN. I can assure you on that score, madam: I shall stay in Vienna.

MRS. WEGRAT. What? Has the matter been settled already?

REUMANN. Yes.

MRS. WEGRAT. So another man has actually been called to Gratz?

REUMANN. No, not that way. But the other man, who was practically sure of the place, has broken his neck climbing a mountain.

FELIX. But then your chances

[1] The Prater is at once the Central Park and the Coney Island of Vienna, plus a great deal more — a park with an area of 2000 acres bounded by the Danube on one side and by the Danube Canal on the other, full of all kinds of amusement places.

should be better than ever. Whom could they possibly consider besides you?

REUMANN. I suppose my chances wouldn't be bad. But I have preferred to forgo them.

MRS. WEGRAT. How?

REUMANN. I won't accept the call.

MRS. WEGRAT. Is that out of superstition?

FELIX. Or out of pride?

REUMANN. Neither. But the thought of having another man's misfortune to thank for my own advancement would be extremely painful to me. Half my life would be spoiled for me. That is neither superstition nor pride, you see, but just commonplace, small-minded vanity.

SALA. You're a subtle one, Doctor.

MRS. WEGRAT. Well, all I gather is that you are going to stay. Which shows how mean your thoughts grow when you are sick.

REUMANN [*changing the subject on purpose*]. Well, Felix, how do you find life in a garrison?

FELIX. Fine.

MRS. WEGRAT. So you are really satisfied, boy?

FELIX. I feel very thankful to all of you. Especially to you, mamma.

MRS. WEGRAT. Why to me especially? After all, the decision lay with your father in the last instance.

REUMANN. He would, of course, have preferred to see you choose a more peaceful calling.

SALA. Oh, but to-day there is none more peaceful.

FELIX. That's where you are right, Mr. von Sala. — By the by, I was to give you the regards of Lieutenant-Colonel Schrotting.

SALA. Thank you. Does he still remember me?

FELIX. Not he alone. We are constantly being reminded of you — at every meal, in fact. Yours is among the pictures of former officers that hang in the mess rooms.

WEGRAT [*enters*]. Good evening. — Why, Felix, are you here again? What a surprise!

FELIX. Good evening, papa. I have applied for a two-day furlough.

WEGRAT. Furlough . . . furlough? A real one? Or is it another one of those little brilliant tricks?

FELIX [*cheerfully and without taking offence*]. I am not in the habit of fibbing, papa, am I?

WEGRAT [*in the same tone*]. I meant no offense, my boy. Even if you had been guilty of deserting the flag, your longing to see your mother would be sufficient excuse for you.

MRS. WEGRAT. To see his parents, you mean.

WEGRAT. Of course — to see us all. But as you are a little under the weather, you come foremost just now. — Well, how are you getting along, Gabrielle? Better, are you not? [*In a low voice, almost timidly*] My love . . . [*He strokes her brow and hair*] Love . . . The air is so mild.

SALA. We are having a wonderful Autumn.

REUMANN. Have you just got away from the Academy, Professor?

WEGRAT. Yes. Now, when I am also the president of it, there is a whole lot to do — and all of it is not pleasant or grateful. But I seem to be made for it, as they have insisted. And I suppose it will have to go on this way. [*With a smile*] As somebody once called me — an art-official.

SALA. Don't be so unjust to yourself, Professor.

MRS. WEGRAT. You must have been walking all that long way home again?

WEGRAT. I even went out of my way some distance — to pass across the old Turkish fort.[1] I am awfully fond of that road. On evenings like this the whole city lies beneath you as if bathed in a silvery mist. — By the by, Gabrielle, I have some greetings to deliver. I met Irene Herms.

MRS. WEGRAT. Is she in Vienna?

WEGRAT. Just passing through. She intends to call on you.

SALA. Has she still got an engagement at Hamburg?

WEGRAT. No, she has left the stage, she told me, and is now living in the country with her married sister.

JOHANNA. I saw her once in a play of yours, Mr. von Sala.

SALA. Then you must have been a very small girl indeed.

[1] The place where the Turks fortified themselves before driven from Vienna by John Sobieski in 1683 is now a small park, "*Türkenschanz-Park*", located in Döbling, one of the northwestern quarters of Greater Vienna. Only a little ways south of this park, and overlooking it, stands the Astronomical Observatory, not far from which Schnitzler had been living for a number of years. Numerous references to localities in this play indicate that he placed the Wegrat home in that very villa quarter of Währing, where he himself was so thoroughly at home.

JOHANNA. She played a Spanish princess.

SALA. Unfortunately. For princesses were not at all in her line. She has never in her life been able to treat verse properly.

REUMANN. And you can still bear that in mind, Mr. von Sala — that some lady on some occasion happened to handle your verse badly?

SALA. Well, why shouldn't I, my dear Doctor? If you were living at the center of the earth, you would know that all things are of equal weight. And were you floating in the center of the universe, you would suspect that all things are of equal importance.

MRS. WEGRAT. How does she look anyhow?

WEGRAT. She is still very pretty.

SALA. Has she preserved her resemblance to that portrait of hers which is hanging in the Museum?

FELIX. What portrait is that?

JOHANNA. Is her portrait really in the Museum?

SALA. Oh, you know it. In the catalogue it is labeled "Actress" — just "Actress." A young woman in the costume of a harlequin, over which she has draped a Greek toga, while at her feet lie a confused heap of masks. With her staring glance turned toward the spectators, she stands there all alone on an empty, dusky stage, surrounded by odd pieces of misfit scenery — one wall of a room, a forest piece, part of an old dungeon . . .

FELIX. And the background shows a southern landscape with palms and plane trees . . .?

SALA. Yes, and it is partly raised so that still farther off you can see a pile of furniture, steps, goblets, chandeliers — all glittering in full daylight.

FELIX. But that's Julian Fichtner's picture?

SALA. Exactly.

FELIX. I had not the slightest idea that the figure of that woman was meant for Irene Herms.

WEGRAT. Twenty-five years have passed since he painted that picture. It caused a tremendous sensation at the time. It was his first big success. And to-day I suppose there are lots of people who no longer remember his name. — Come to think of it, I asked Irene Herms about him. But strange to say, not even his "perennial best girl" could tell where in this world he happens to be straying.

FELIX. I talked with him only a few days ago.

WEGRAT. What? You have seen Julian Fichtner? He was in Salzburg? — When?

FELIX. Only about three or four days ago. He looked me up, and we spent the evening together.

[MRS. WEGRAT *throws a quick glance at* DR. REUMANN]

WEGRAT. How is he doing? What did he tell you?

FELIX. He has turned rather gray, but otherwise he didn't seem to have changed at all.

WEGRAT. How long can it be now since he left Vienna? Two years, isn't it?

MRS. WEGRAT. A little more.

FELIX. He has traveled far and wide.

SALA. Yes, now and then I have had a postcard from him.

WEGRAT. So have we. But I thought you and he were corresponding regularly.

SALA. Regularly? Oh, no.

JOHANNA. Isn't he a friend of yours?

SALA. As a rule I have no friends. And if I have any, I repudiate them.

JOHANNA. But you used to be quite intimate with him.

SALA. He with me rather than I with him.

FELIX. What do you mean by that, Mr. von Sala?

JOHANNA. Oh, I can understand it. I suppose you have had the same experience with most people.

SALA. Something very much like it, at least.

JOHANNA. Yes, one can see it from what you write, too.

SALA. I hope so. Otherwise it might just as well have been written by somebody else.

WEGRAT. Did he say when he would be back in Vienna?

FELIX. Soon, I think. But he didn't say very definitely.

JOHANNA. I should like to see Mr. Fichtner again. I am fond of that kind of people.

WEGRAT. What do you mean by "that kind of people"?

JOHANNA. Who are always arriving from some far-off place.

WEGRAT. But as a rule he never arrived from far-off places when you knew him, Johanna. . . . He was living right here.

JOHANNA. What did it matter whether he was living here or elsewhere?

— Even when he came to see us daily it was always as if he had just arrived from some great distance.

WEGRAT. Oh, of course. . . .

FELIX. I had often the same feeling.

WEGRAT. Well, it's strange how he has been knocking about in the world — these last few years at least.

SALA. Don't you think his restlessness goes farther back? Were you not students together in the Academy?

WEGRAT. Yes. And to know him properly, you must have known him then. There was something fascinating about him as a young man, something that dazzled. Never have I known anybody whom the term "of great promise" fitted so completely.

SALA. Well, he has kept a whole lot of it.

WEGRAT. But think of all he might have achieved!

REUMANN. I believe that what you might achieve you do achieve.

WEGRAT. Not always. Julian was undoubtedly destined for higher things. What he lacked was the capacity for concentration, the inward calm. He could never feel at home for good anywhere. And the misfortune has been that in his own works, too, he has lived only as a transient, so to speak.

FELIX. He showed me a couple of sketches he had made recently.

WEGRAT. Good?

FELIX. To me there was something gripping about them.

MRS. WEGRAT. Why gripping? What kind of pictures were they?

FELIX. Landscapes. And as a rule very pleasant ones at that.

JOHANNA. Once in a dream I saw a Spring landscape, very sunlit and soft, and yet it made me weep.

SALA. Yes, the sadness of certain things lies much deeper than we commonly suspect.

WEGRAT. So he's working again? Then, perhaps, we may expect something out of the ordinary.

SALA. In the case of anybody who has been an artist once you are never safe against surprises.

WEGRAT. That's it, Mr. von Sala. That's where the great difference lies. In the case of an official you can feel perfectly safe on that score. [*With cheerful self-contempt*] Such a one paints every year his nice little picture for the exhibition, and couldn't possibly do anything else.

REUMANN. It is still open to question who do most for the advancement of life and art: officials like you, Professor, or — our so-called men of genius.

WEGRAT. Oh, I have not the least intention to play the modest one. But as to men of genius — we had better not talk of them at all. There you are dealing with a world by itself, lying outside of all discussion — as do the elements.

REUMANN. My opinion, I must confess, is utterly different.

WEGRAT. Oh, it's of no use discussing anybody but those who have distinct limitations. And what I have found is — that he who knows his own limitations best is the better man. And on this point I have pretty good reason for self-respect. — Do you feel chilly, Gabrielle?

MRS. WEGRAT. No.

WEGRAT. But you had better pull the shawl a little closer about you, and then we should have a little exercise — in so far as it's possible in here.

MRS. WEGRAT. All right. — Please, Doctor, give me your arm. You haven't paid the least attention to your patient yet.

REUMANN. At your service!

[*The rest start ahead,* JOHANNA *walking with her brother, and* WEGRAT *with* SALA. DR. REUMANN *and* MRS. WEGRAT *seem about to follow, when she suddenly stops*]

MRS. WEGRAT. Did you notice his eyes light up — I mean, the eyes of Felix, when they were talking of *him?* It was most peculiar.

REUMANN. Men of Mr. Fichtner's type appear undoubtedly very interesting to young people. They seem to carry with them an odor of romance.

MRS. WEGRAT [*shaking her head*]. And he looked him up. . . . It is perfectly clear that he went to Salzburg just to see him again. I suppose he is beginning to feel a little deserted.

REUMANN. Why not pay a visit to a young friend when one happens to be near the place where he is living? I can see nothing peculiar in that.

MRS. WEGRAT. Perhaps you are right. Perhaps I might have looked at the matter in the same way not long ago. But now, in the face of . . . No, Doctor, I am not going to be sentimental.

REUMANN. I don't object to sentiment, but to nonsense.

MRS. WEGRAT [*smiling*]. Thank you. — However, I have occasion to think of many different things. And it is no reason for taking it too seriously, my dear friend. You know, of course, that I told you everything merely that I might have a kind and sensible man with whom to discuss the past — and not at all to be absolved of any guilt.

REUMANN. To give happiness is more than being free of guilt. And as this has been granted you, it is clear that you have made full atonement — if you'll pardon the use of such a preposterously extravagant term.

MRS. WEGRAT. How can you talk like that?

REUMANN. Well, am I not right?

MRS. WEGRAT. Just as if I couldn't feel how all of us, deceivers and deceived, must seem equally contemptible to you in particular!

REUMANN. Why to me in particular . . .? What you call contempt, madam — supposing I did feel anything like it — would, after all, be nothing but disguised envy. Or do you think I lack the desire to conduct my life as I see most other people conducting theirs? I simply haven't the knack. If I am to be frank, madam — the deepest yearning of all within me is just to be a rogue: a fellow who can dissemble, seduce, sneer, make his way over dead bodies. But thanks to a certain shortcoming in my temperament, I am condemned to remain a decent man — and what is still more painful perhaps: to hear everybody say that I am one.

MRS. WEGRAT [*who has been listening with a smile*]. I wonder whether you have told the truth about what is keeping you here in Vienna?

REUMANN. Certainly. Indeed, I have no other reason. I have no right to have any other. Don't let us talk any more of it.

MRS. WEGRAT. Are we not such good friends that I can talk calmly with you of everything? I know what you have in mind. But I believe that it might be in your power to drive certain illusions and dreams out of the soul of a young girl. And it would be such a comfort to me if I could leave you for good among these people, all of whom are so near to me, and who yet know nothing whatever about each other — who are hardly aware of their mutual relationships even, and who seem fated to flitter away from each other to God knows where.

REUMANN. We'll talk of those things, madam, when it's time to do so.

MRS. WEGRAT. Of course, I regret nothing. I believe I have never regretted anything. But I have a feeling that something is out of order. Perhaps it's nothing but that strange glimmer in the eyes of Felix which has caused all this unrest within me. But isn't it peculiar — uncanny almost — to think that a man like him may go through the world with all his senses open and yet never know whom he has to thank for being in the world?

REUMANN. Don't let us indulge in generalities, Mrs. Wegrat. In that way you can set the most solid things shaking and swaying until the steadiest eyes begin to grow dizzy. My own conclusion is this: that a lie which has proved strong enough to sustain the peace of a household can be no less respectable than a truth which could do nothing but destroy the image of the past, fill the present with sorrow, and confuse the vision of the future. [*He goes out with* MRS. WEGRAT]

JOHANNA [*entering with* SALA]. In this way one always gets back to the same spot. I suppose your garden is bigger, Mr. von Sala?

SALA. My garden is the whole wide woods — that is, for people whose fancy is not restrained by a light fence.

JOHANNA. Your villa has grown very pretty.

SALA. Oh, you know it then?

JOHANNA. A little while ago I saw it again for the first time in three years.

SALA. But three years ago they hadn't put in the foundations yet.

JOHANNA. To me it was already standing there.

SALA. How mysterious. . . .

JOHANNA. Not at all. If you will only remember. Once we made an excursion to Dornbach [1] — my parents, and Felix, and I. There we met you and Mr. Fichtner, and it happened on the very spot where your house was to be built. And now everything looks just as you described it to us then.

SALA. But how did you happen to be in that vicinity?

JOHANNA. Since mamma was taken

[1] A suburb near the western limits of Vienna and not far from the location indicated for the Wegrat home.

sick I have often had to take my walks alone . . .

SALA. And when was it you passed by my house?

JOHANNA. Not long ago — to-day.

SALA. To-day?

JOHANNA. Yes. I went all around it.

SALA. Oh? All around it? — Did you also notice the little gate that leads directly into the woods?

JOHANNA. Yes. — But from that spot the house is almost invisible. The leafage is very thick. — Where have you placed those busts of the Roman emperors?

SALA. They stand on columns at the opening of an avenue of trees. Right by is a small marble bench, and in front of the bench a little pool has been made.

JOHANNA [*nodding*]. Just as you told us that time. . . . And there is a greenish gray glitter on the water — and in the morning the shadow from the beech tree falls across it. . . . I know. [*She looks up at him and smiles; both go out together*]

ACT II

In the home of JULIAN FICHTNER. *A pleasant, rather distinguished room in a state of slight disorder. Books are piled on two chairs, while on another chair stands an open traveling bag.* JULIAN *is seated at a writing desk, from the drawers of which he is taking out papers. Some of these he destroys, while others are thrown into the waste-paper basket.*

VALET [*announcing*]. Mr. von Sala. [*He goes out*]

[SALA *enters. His custom to walk up and down while talking asserts itself strikingly during the following scene. Now and then he sits down for a moment, often only on the arm of a chair. At times he stops beside* JULIAN, *putting his hand on the latter's shoulder while speaking. Two or three times during the scene he puts his hand to the left side of his chest, in a manner suggesting discomfort of some kind. But this gesture is not sharply accentuated*]

JULIAN. I am delighted. [*They shake hands*]

SALA. So you got back early this morning?

JULIAN. Yes.

SALA. And mean to stay . . . ?

JULIAN. Haven't decided yet. Things are a little upset, as you see. And I fear they'll never be quite in shape again. I intend to give up this place.

SALA. Too bad. I have become so accustomed to it. In what direction are you going to move?

JULIAN. It's possible that I don't take any new quarters at all for a while, but just keep on moving about as I have been doing the last few years. I am even considering to have my things sold at auction.

SALA. That's a thought which gets no sympathy from me.

JULIAN. Really, I haven't got much sympathy for it myself. But the material side of the question has to be considered a little, too. I have been spending too much these last years, and it has to be evened up somehow. Probably I'll settle down again later on. Sometime one must get back to peace and work, I suppose. — Well, how goes it with you? What are our friends and acquaintances doing?

SALA. So you haven't seen anybody yet?

JULIAN. Not one. And you are the only one I have written about my being here.

SALA. And you have not yet called on the Wegrats?

JULIAN. No, I even hesitate to go there.

SALA. Why?

JULIAN. After a certain age it would perhaps be better never to put your foot in any place where your earlier years were spent. It is so rare to find things and people the same as when you left them. Isn't that so? — Mrs. Gabrielle is said to have changed considerably in the course of her sickness. That's what Felix told me, at least. I should prefer not to see her again. Oh, you can understand that, Sala.

SALA [*rather surprised*]. Of course, I understand. How long is it you have had no news from Vienna?

JULIAN. I have constantly started ahead of my mail. Not a single letter has overtaken me during the last fortnight. [*Alarmed*] What has happened?

SALA. Mrs. Gabrielle died a week ago.

JULIAN. Oh! [*He is deeply moved; for a while he walks back and forth; then he resumes his seat and says after a pause*] Of course, it was to be expected, and yet . . .

SALA. Her death came easily. . . . You know how those left behind always pretend to know such things with certainty. Anyhow, she fell asleep quietly one night and never woke up again.

JULIAN [*in a low voice*]. Poor Gabrielle! — Did you see anything of her toward the end?

SALA. Yes, I went there almost daily.

JULIAN. Oh, did you?

SALA. Johanna asked me. She was literally afraid of being alone with her mother.

JULIAN. Afraid?

SALA. The sick woman inspired her with a sort of horror. She has calmed down a little now.

JULIAN. What a strange creature. . . . And how does our friend, the professor, bear up under his loss? Resigned to the will of God, I suppose?

SALA. My dear Julian, the man has a position. I fear we cannot grasp that, we who are gods by the grace of the moment — and also less than men at times.

JULIAN. Of course, Felix is not here?

SALA. I talked with him less than an hour ago, and informed him that you were here. It made him very happy to have you call on him in Salzburg.

JULIAN. It looked so to me. And he did me a lot of good. For that matter, I have really thought of settling down in Salzburg.

SALA. For ever?

JULIAN. For a while. On account of Felix, too. His unspoiled nature affects me very pleasantly — it makes me actually feel younger. Were he not my son, I might almost envy him — and not on account of his youth alone. [*With a smile*] Thus there is nothing left for me but to love him. I must say that I feel a little ashamed at having to do it incognito, so to speak.

SALA. Are not these feelings a little belated in their appearance?

JULIAN. Oh, I suppose they were there long before I knew. And, you know, I saw the youngster for the first time when he was ten or eleven years old, and it was only then I learned that he was my son.

SALA. It must have been a strange meeting between you and Mrs. Gabrielle, ten years after you had committed that piece of hideous perfidy — as our ancestors used to put it.

JULIAN. It wasn't strange even. It came about quite naturally. Shortly after my return from Paris I happened to meet Wegrat on the street. Of course, we had heard of each other from time to time, and we met as old friends. There are people who seem born to a fate of that kind. . . . And as for Gabrielle . . .

SALA. She had forgiven you, of course?

JULIAN. Forgiven . . . ? It was more or less than that. Only once did we talk of the past — she without reproach, and I without regret: as if the whole story had happened to somebody else. And after that never again. I might have thought some miracle had wiped those earlier days out of her memory. In fact, as far as I am concerned, there seemed to be no real connection between that quiet matron and the creature I had once loved. And as for the youngster — well, you know — at first I didn't care more for him than I might have cared for any other pretty and gifted child. — Of course, ten years ago my life had a different aspect. I was still clinging to so many things which since then have slipped away from me. It was only in the course of time that I became more and more drawn to the house, until at last I began to feel at home there.

SALA. I hope you never took offense at my gradual discovery of the true state of affairs.

JULIAN. You, at any rate, didn't think me very sensible. . . .

SALA. Why not? I too find that family life in itself is quite attractive. Only it ought, after all, to be experienced in one's own family.

JULIAN. You know very well that I have frequently felt something like actual shame at the incongruity of that relationship. It was in fact one of the things that drove me away. Of course, there were a lot of other things that pressed on me at the time. Especially that I couldn't make a real success out of my work.

SALA. But you hadn't been exhibiting anything for a long time.

JULIAN. It wasn't external success I had in mind. I could never get into the right mood any more, and I hoped that traveling would help me again, as it had done so often in earlier years.

SALA. And how did you fare? We have heard so little of you here. You might really have written me a little more frequently and fully. For you

know, of course, that I care a great deal more for you than for most other people. We have such a knack of giving each other the right cue — don't you think? There are sentimental people who speak of such a relation as friendship. And it is not impossible that we used to address each other by our Christian names some time during the last century, or that you may even have wept your fill on my shoulder. I have missed you more than once during these two years — honestly! On my lonely walks I have quite frequently thought of our pleasant chats in the Dornbach park, where we were in the habit of disposing temporarily of [*quoting*] "what is most lofty and profound in this our world." — Well, Julian, from where do you come anyhow?

JULIAN. From the Tyrol? During the Summer I made long tours on foot. I have even turned mountain climber in my old days. I spent a whole week at one of those pasturing grounds in the Alps. . . . Yes, I have been up to all sorts of things. It's a wonder what you can do when you are all alone.

SALA. And you have really been all alone?

JULIAN. Yes.

SALA. All these last years?

JULIAN. If I don't count a few nonsensical interruptions — yes.

SALA. But there should have been no difficulty in that respect.

JULIAN. I know. But I cannot rest satisfied with what is still offered me of that kind of thing. I have been badly spoiled, Sala. Up to a certain period my life passed away in a constant orgy of tenderness and passion, and of power, you might say. And that is all over. Oh, Sala, what pitiful fictions I have had to steal, and beg, and buy during these last years! It gives me nausea to look back at it, and it horrifies me to look ahead. And I ask myself: can there really be nothing left of all that glow with which I once embraced the world, but a sort of silly wrath because it's all over — because I — *I* — am no less subject to human laws than anybody else?

SALA. Why all this bitterness, Julian? There is still a great deal to be had out of this world, even when some of the pleasures and enjoyments of our earlier years have begun to appear tasteless or unseemly. And how can you, of all people, miss that feeling, Julian?

JULIAN. Snatch his part from an actor and ask him if he can still take pleasure in the beautiful scenery surrounding him.

SALA. But you have begun to work again while you were traveling?

JULIAN. Hardly at all.

SALA. Felix told us that you had brought some sketches from your trunk in order to show him.

JULIAN. He spoke of them?

SALA. Yes, and nothing but good.

JULIAN. Really?

SALA. And as you showed those things to him, you must have thought rather well of them yourself.

JULIAN. That was not the reason why I let him see them. [*Walking back and forth*] I must tell you — at the risk of having you think me a perfect fool.

SALA. Oh, a little more or less won't count. Speak out.

JULIAN. I wanted him at least not to lose faith in me. Can you understand that? After all, he is nearer to me than the rest. Of course, I know — to everybody, even to you, I am one who has gone down, who is finished — one of those whose only talent was his youth. It doesn't bother me very much. But to Felix I want to be the man I was once — just as I still *am* that man. When he learns sometime that I am his father, he must be proud of it.

SALA. When he learns it . . . ?

JULIAN. I have no intention to keep it hidden from him forever. Now, when his mother is dead, less than ever. Last time I talked to him, it became clear to me, not only that it would be right, but that it would almost be a duty, to tell him the truth. He has a mind for essentials. He will understand everything. And I shall have a human being who belongs to me, who knows that he belongs to me, and for whose sake it is worth while to keep on living in this world. I shall live near him, and be with him a good deal. Once more I shall have my existence put on a solid basis, so to speak, and not hung in mid-air, as it is now. And then I shall be able to work again — work as I did once — as when I was a young man. Work, that is what I am going to do — and all of you will turn out to have been wrong — all of you!

SALA. But to whom has it occurred to doubt you? If you could only have heard us talk of you a little while ago,

Julian. Everybody expects that, sooner or later, you — will find yourself again completely.

Julian. Well, that's enough about me, more than enough. Pardon me. Let us hear something about yourself at last. I suppose you have already moved into your new house?

Sala. Yes.

Julian. And what plans have you for the immediate future?

Sala. I am thinking of going to Asia with Count Ronsky.

Julian. With Ronsky? Are you going to join that expedition about which so much has been written?

Sala. Yes. Some such undertaking has been tempting me for a long time. Are you perhaps familiar with the Rolston report on the Bactrian and Median excavations of 1892?

Julian. No.

Sala. Well, it is positively staggering. Think of it — they suspect that under the refuse and the dust lies a monster city, something like the present London in extent. At that time they made their way into a palace, where the most wonderful paintings were found. These were perfectly preserved in several rooms. And they dug out stairways — built of a marble that is nowhere to be found nowadays. Perhaps it was brought from some island which since then has sunk beneath the sea. Three hundred and twelve steps glittering like opals and leading down into unknown depths. . . . Unknown because they ceased digging after they had reached the three hundred and twelfth step — God only knows why! I don't think I can tell you how those steps pique my curiosity.

Julian. But it has always been asserted that the Rolston expedition was lost?

Sala. No, not quite as bad as that. Out of twenty-four Europeans, eight got back after three years in spite of all — and half a dozen of them had been lost before they ever got there. You have to pass through pretty bad fever belts. And at that time they had to face an attack of the Kurds, too, by which several were done for. But we shall be much better equipped. Furthermore, at the border we shall be joined by a Russian contingent which is traveling under military escort. And here, too, they think of putting a military aspect on the affair. As to the fever — that doesn't scare me — it can't do me any harm. As a young man I spent a number of particularly dangerous summer nights in the *thermæ* of Caracalla — you know, of course, what boggy ground that is — and remained well.

Julian. But that doesn't prove anything.

Sala. Oh yes, a little. There I came across a Roman girl whose home was right by the Appian Way. She caught the fever and died from it. . . . To be sure, I am not as young as I was then, but so far I have been perfectly well.

Julian [*who has already smoked several cigarettes, offers one to* Sala]. Don't you smoke?

Sala. Thanks. Really, I shouldn't. Only yesterday Dr. Reumann told me I mustn't. . . . Nothing particular — my heart is a little restless, that's all. Well, a single one won't do any harm, I suppose.

Valet [*enters*]. Miss Herms, sir. She's asking whether she can see you.

Julian. Certainly. Ask her to come in.

[Valet *goes out*]

Irene Herms [*enters. She is about forty-three, but doesn't look it. Her dress is simple and in perfect taste. Her movements are vivacious, and at times almost youthful in their swiftness. Her hair is deeply blonde in color and very heavy. Her eyes are merry, good-humored most of the time, and easily filled with tears. She comes in with a smile and nods in a friendly manner to* Sala. *To* Julian, *who has gone to meet her, she holds out her hand with an expression on her face that is almost happy*]. Good evening. Well? [*She has the habit of pronouncing that "well" in a tone of sympathetic inquiry*] So I did right after all in keeping my patience a couple of days more. Here I've got you back now. [*To* Sala] Can you guess the length of time we haven't seen each other?

Julian. More than three years.

Irene [*nods assent and permits him at last to withdraw his hand from hers*]. In all our lives that has never happened before. And your last letter is already two months old. I call it "letter" just to save my face. But it was only a view-card. Where in the world have you been anyhow?

Julian. Sit down, won't you? I'll

tell you all about it. Won't you take off your hat? You'll stay a while, I hope?

IRENE. Of course. — And the way you look! [*To* SALA] Fine, don't you think? I've always known that a gray beard would make him look awfully interesting.

SALA [*to* JULIAN]. Now you'll have nothing but pleasantries to listen to. Unfortunately I shall have to be moving.

IRENE. You're not leaving on my account, I hope?

SALA. How can you imagine such a thing, Miss Herms?

IRENE. I suppose you are bound for the Wegrats'? — What do you think of it, Julian? Isn't it dreadful? [*To* SALA] Please give them my regards.

SALA. I'm not going there now. I'm going home.

IRENE. Home? And you say that in such a matter-of-fact way? I understand you are now living in a perfect palace.

SALA. No, anything but that. A modest country house. It would give me special pleasure, Miss Herms, if sometime you would make sure of it in person. My garden is really pretty.

IRENE. Have you fruit trees, too, and vegetables?

SALA. In this respect I can only offer you a stray cabbage and a wild cherry tree.

IRENE. Well, if my time permit, I shall make a point of coming out there to have a look at your villa.

JULIAN. Must you leave again so soon?

IRENE. Certainly. I have to get home again. Only this morning I had a letter from my little nephew — and he's longing for me. A little rascal of five, and he, too, is longing already. What do you think of that?

SALA. And you are also longing to get back, I suppose?

IRENE. It isn't that. But I'm beginning to get accustomed to Vienna again. As I'm going about the streets here, I run across memories at every corner. — Can you guess where I was yesterday, Julian? In the rooms where I used to live as a child. It wasn't easy by any means, as a lot of strangers are living there now. But I got into the rooms just the same.

SALA [*with amicable irony*]. How did you manage it, Miss Herms?

IRENE. I sneaked in under a pretext. I pretended to believe that there was a room to be let — for a single elderly lady. But at last I fell to weeping so that I could see the people thought me out of my mind. And then I told them the true reason for my coming there. A clerk in the post-office is living there now with his wife and two children. One of these was such a nice little chap. He was playing railroad with an engine that could be wound up, and that ran over one of my feet all the time. . . . But I can see that all this doesn't interest you very much, Mr. von Sala.

SALA. How *can* you interrupt yourself like that, Miss Herms, just when it is most exciting? I should have loved to hear more about it. But now I must really go, unfortunately. Good-by, Julian. — Then, Miss Herms, I may count on a visit from you. [*He goes out*]

IRENE. Thank God!

JULIAN [*smiling*]. Do you still have the same antipathy for him?

IRENE. Antipathy? — I hate him! Nothing but your incredible kindness of heart would let him come near you. For you have no worse enemy.

JULIAN. Where did you get that idea?

IRENE. My instinct tells me — you can feel such things.

JULIAN. I fear, however, that even now you cannot judge him quite objectively.

IRENE. Why not?

JULIAN. You can't forgive him that you failed in one of his plays ten years ago.

IRENE. Unfortunately it's already twelve years ago. And it wasn't my fault. For my opinion in regard to his so-called poetry is, that it's nonsense. And I am not the only one who thinks so, as you know. But you don't know him, of course. To appreciate that gentleman in all his glory, you must have enjoyed him at a rehearsal. [*Imitating* SALA] Oh, madam, that's verse — it's verse, dear madam. . . . Only when you have heard that kind of thing from him can you understand how limitless his arrogance is. . . . And everybody knows, by the way, that he killed his wife.

JULIAN [*amused*]. But, girl, who in the world put such horrible ideas into your head?

IRENE. Oh, people don't die willy-nilly like that, at twenty-five. . . .

JULIAN. I hope, Irene, that you don't talk like this to other people?

IRENE. What would be the use? Everyone knows it but you. And I for my part have no reason to spare Mr. von Sala, who for twenty years has pursued me with his jeers.

JULIAN. And yet you are going to call on him?

IRENE. Of course. Beautiful villas interest me very much. And they tell me his is ravishing. If you were only to see people who . . .

JULIAN. Hadn't killed anybody . . .

IRENE. Really, we show him too much honor in talking so long about him. That ends it. — Well, Julian? How goes it? Why haven't you written me oftener? Is it possible you didn't dare?

JULIAN. Dare . . . ?

IRENE. Were you forbidden, I mean?

JULIAN. I see. — Nobody can forbid me anything.

IRENE. Honestly? You live all by yourself?

JULIAN. Yes.

IRENE. I'm delighted. I can't help it, Julian, but I am delighted. Although it's sheer nonsense. This day, or the next, there'll be something new going on.

JULIAN. Those days are past.

IRENE. If it were only true! — Can I have a cup of tea?

JULIAN. Certainly. The samovar is right there.

IRENE. Where? — Oh, over there. And the tea? — Oh, I know! [*She opens a small cupboard and brings out what she needs; during the next few minutes she is busy preparing the tea*]

JULIAN. So you are really going to stay here only a couple of days more?

IRENE. Of course. I have done all my ordering. You understand, in my sister's house out there one doesn't need to dress up.

JULIAN. Tell me about it. How do you like it out there?

IRENE. Splendidly. Oh, it's bliss merely to hear nothing more about the theater.

JULIAN. And yet you'll return to it sometime.

IRENE. That's where you are completely mistaken. Why should I? You must remember that I have now reached the goal of all my desires: fresh air, and woods right by; horseback riding across meadows and fields; early morning seated in the big park, dressed in my kimono, and nobody daring to intrude. To put it plainly: no people, no manager, no public, no colleagues, no playwrights — though, of course, all are not as arrogant as your precious Sala. — Well, all this I have attained at last. I live in the country. I have a country house — almost a little palace, you might say. I have a park, and a horse, and a kimono — to use as much as I please. It isn't all mine, I admit — except the kimono, of course — but what does that matter? In the bargain, I live with the best people one could hope to find in this world. For my brother-in-law is, if possible, a finer fellow than Lora herself even.

JULIAN. Wasn't he rather making up to you once?

IRENE. I should say he was! He wanted to marry me at any cost. Of course! — It was always in me that they were at first — I mean that they always *have been* in love with me. But as a rule the clever ones have gone over to Lora. In fact, I have always felt a little distrustful toward you because you never fell in love with Lora. And how much she is ahead of me — well, *you* know, and it's no use talking of it. What all don't I owe to Lora! . . . If it hadn't been for her . . . ! — Well, it's with them I have been living the last half year.

JULIAN. The question is only how long you are going to stand it.

IRENE. How long . . . ? But, Julian, I must ask you what there could be to make me leave such a paradise and return to the morass where I [*in a lowered voice*] spent twenty-five years of my life. What could I possibly expect out of the theater anyhow? I am not made for elderly parts. The heroic mother, the shrewish dame and the funny old woman are equally little to my liking. I intend to die as "the young lady from the castle" — as an old maid, you might say — and if everything goes right, I shall appear to the grandchildren of my sister some hundred years from now as the Lady in White. In a word, I have the finest kind of a life ahead of me. — Why are you laughing?

JULIAN. It pleases me to see you so jolly again — so youthful.

IRENE. It's the country air, Julian. You should try it yourself for a good long while. It's glorious! In fact, I think

I have missed my true calling. I'm sure the good Lord meant me for a milkmaid or farm girl of some kind. Or perhaps for a young shepherd. I have always looked particularly well in pants. — There now. Do you want me to pour a cup for you at once? [*She pours the tea*] Have you nothing to go with it?

JULIAN. I think there must still be a few crackers left in my bag. [*He takes a small package out of his traveling bag*]

IRENE. Thanks. That's fine.

JULIAN. This is quite a new fancy of yours, however.

IRENE. Crackers . . . ?

JULIAN. No, nature.

IRENE. How can you say so? I have always had a boundless love for nature. Don't you recall the excursions we used to make? Don't you remember how once we fell asleep in the woods on a hot summer afternoon? And don't you ever think of that shrine of the Holy Virgin, on the hill where we were caught by the storm? . . . Oh, mercy! Nature is no silly illusion. And still later — when I struck the bad days and wanted to kill myself for your sake, fool that I was . . . then nature simply proved my salvation. Indeed, Julian! I could still show you the place where I threw myself on the grass and wept. You have to walk ten minutes from the station, through an avenue of acacias, and then on to the brook. Yes, I threw myself on the grass and wept and wailed. It was one of those days, you know, when you had again sent me packing from your door. Well, and then, when I had been lying half an hour in the grass, and had wept my fill, then I got up again — and began to scamper all over the meadow. Just like a kid, all by myself. Then I wiped my eyes and felt quite right again. [*Pause*] Of course, next morning I was at your door again, setting up a howl, and then the story began all over again.

[*It is growing dark*]

JULIAN. Why do you still think of all that?

IRENE. But you do it, too. And who has proved the more stupid of us two in the end? Who? Ask yourself, on your conscience. Who? . . . Have you been more happy with anybody else than with me? Has anybody else clung to you as I did? Has anybody else been so fond of you? . . . No, I am sure. And as to that foolish affair into which I stumbled during my engagement abroad — you might just as well have overlooked it. Really, there isn't as much to that kind of thing as you men want to make out — when it happens to one of us, that is to say. [*Both drink of their tea*]

JULIAN. Should I get some light?

IRENE. It's quite cosy in the twilight like this.

JULIAN. "Not much to it," you say. Perhaps you are right. But when it happens to anybody, he gets pretty mad as a rule. And if we had made up again — it would never have been as before. It's better as it is. When the worst was over, we became good friends once more, and so we have been ever since. And that is a pretty fine thing, too.

IRENE. Yes. And nowadays I'm quite satisfied. But at that time . . . ! Oh, mercy, what a time that was! But you don't know anything about it, of course. It was afterward I began really to love you — after I had lost you through my own thoughtlessness. It was only then I learned how to be faithful in the true sense. For anything that has happened to me since then . . . But it's asking too much that a man should understand that kind of thing.

JULIAN. I understand quite well, Irene. You may be sure.

IRENE. And besides I want to tell you something: it was nothing but a well-deserved punishment for both of us.

JULIAN. For both of us?

IRENE. Yes, that's what I have figured out long ago. A well-deserved punishment.

JULIAN. For both of us?

IRENE. Yes, for you, too.

JULIAN. But what do you mean by that?

IRENE. We had deserved no better.

JULIAN. We . . . ? In what way?

IRENE [*very seriously*]. You are so very clever otherwise, Julian. Now what do you say — do you think it could have happened as it did — do you think I could have made a mistake like that — if we — had had a child? Ask yourself on your conscience, Julian — do you believe it? I don't, and you don't either. Everything would have happened in a different way. Everything. We had stayed together then. We had had *more* children. We had married. We might be living together now. I shouldn't have become an old-

maidish "young lady from the castle," and you wouldn't have become . . .

JULIAN. An old bachelor.

IRENE. Well, if you say it yourself. And the main thing is this: we *had* a child. I had a child. [*Pause*]

JULIAN [*walking back and forth*]. What's the use, Irene? Why do you begin to talk of all those forgotten things again . . . ?

IRENE. Forgotten?

JULIAN. . . . Things gone by.

IRENE. Yes, they are bygone, of course. But out there in the country you have plenty of time. All sorts of things keep passing through your head. And especially when you see other people's children — Lora has two boys, you know — then you get all sorts of notions. It almost amounted to a vision not long ago.

JULIAN. What?

IRENE. It was toward evening, and I had walked across the fields. I do it quite often, all by myself. Far and wide there was nobody to be seen. And the village down below was quite deserted, too. And I walked on and on, always in direction of the woods. And suddenly I was no longer alone. You were with me. And between us was the child. We were holding it by the hands — our little child. [*Angrily, to keep herself from crying*] It's too silly for anything! I know, of course, that our child would be a gawky youngster of twenty-three by now — that it might have turned into a scamp or a good-for-nothing girl. Or that it might be dead already. Or that it had drifted out into the wide world, so that we had nothing left of it — oh, yes, yes. . . . But we should have had it once, for all that — once there would have been a little child that seemed rather fond of us. And . . . [*She is unable to go on; silence follows*]

JULIAN [*softly*]. You shouldn't talk yourself into such a state, Irene.

IRENE. I am not talking myself into anything.

JULIAN. Don't brood. Accept things as they are. There have been other things in your life — better things, perhaps. Your life has been much richer than that of a mere mother could ever have been. . . . You have been an artist.

IRENE [*as if to herself*]. I don't care that much for it.

JULIAN. A great, famous one — that means something after all. And your life has brought you many other exquisite experiences — since the one with me. I am sure of it.

IRENE. What have I got left of it? What does it amount to? A woman who has no child has never been a woman. But a woman who once might have had one — who should have had one, and who — [*with a glance at him*] — has never become a mother, she is nothing but — oh! But that's what a man cannot understand! It is what not one of them can understand! In this respect the very best one of the lot will always remain something of a cad. Is there one of you who knows how many of his own offspring have been set adrift in the world? I know at least that there are none of mine. Can you say as much?

JULIAN. And if I did know . . .

IRENE. How? Have you got one really? — Oh, speak, please! You can tell *me*, Julian, can't you? Where is it? How old is it? A boy? Or a girl?

JULIAN. Don't question me. . . . Even if I had a child, it wouldn't belong to you anyhow.

IRENE. He has a child! He has a child! [*Pause*] Why do you permit it to be drifting around in the world then?

JULIAN. You yourself have given the explanation: in this respect the very best of us remains always something of a cad. And I am not the best one at that.

IRENE. Why don't you go and get it?

JULIAN. How could it be any of my concern? How could I dare to make it my concern? Oh, that's enough. . . . [*Pause*] Do you want another cup of tea?

IRENE. No, thanks. No more now. [*Pause; it is growing darker*] He has a child, and I have never known it! [*Protracted silence*]

[VALET *enters*]

JULIAN. What is it?

VALET. Lieutenant Wegrat asks if you are at home, sir?

JULIAN. Certainly. Ask him in.

[VALET *goes out after having turned on the light*]

IRENE. Young Wegrat? — I thought he had already left again. — The poor chap! He seemed utterly stunned.

JULIAN. I can imagine.

IRENE. You visited him at Salzburg?

JULIAN. Yes, I happened to be there a couple of days last August.

FELIX [*enters, dressed as a civilian*]. Good evening. — Good evening, Miss Herms.

IRENE. Good evening, Lieutenant.

JULIAN. My dear Felix — I was going to call on you — this very evening. It's extremely nice of you to take the trouble.

FELIX. I have to be off again the day after to-morrow, and so I wasn't sure whether I could find any chance at all to see you.

JULIAN. Won't you take off your coat? — Think of it, I didn't have the slightest idea . . . It was Sala who told me — less than an hour ago.

[IRENE *is looking from one to the other*]

FELIX. We didn't dream of this when we took that walk in the Mirabell Gardens [1] last summer.

JULIAN. Was it very sudden?

FELIX. Yes. And I, who couldn't be with her . . . Late that evening I had to leave, and she died during the night.

IRENE. Say rather that she didn't wake up again next morning.

FELIX. We owe a lot of thanks to you, Miss Herms.

IRENE. Oh, please . . . !

FELIX. It always gave my mother so much pleasure to have you with her, chatting, or playing the piano to her.

IRENE. Oh, don't mention my playing . . . !

[*A clock strikes*]

IRENE. Is it that late? Then I have to go.

JULIAN. What's the hurry, Miss Herms?

IRENE. I'm going to the opera. I have to make good use of the few days I shall still be here.

FELIX. Shall we see you at our house again, Miss Herms?

IRENE. Certainly. — You'll have to leave before me, won't you?

FELIX. Yes, my furlough will be up . . .

IRENE [*as if en passant*]. How long have you been an officer anyhow, Felix?

FELIX. For three years really — but I didn't apply for a commission until this year — a little too late, perhaps.

IRENE. Too late? Why? — How old are you, Felix?

FELIX. Twenty-three.

IRENE. Oh! [*Pause*]. But when I saw you four years ago as a volunteer, I thought at once you would stay in the service. — Do you remember, Julian, I told you so at the time?

JULIAN. Yes. . . .

FELIX. That must have been in the summer, the last time you called on us.

IRENE. I think so. . . .

FELIX. Many things have changed since then.

IRENE. Indeed! Those were still happy days. — Don't you think so, Julian? For we haven't met either since we spent those beautiful summer evenings in the garden of the Wegrats.

[JULIAN *nods assent*]

IRENE [*stands again looking now at* JULIAN *and now at* FELIX; *brief pause*]. Oh, but now it's high time for me to be gone. — Good-by. Remember me at home, Lieutenant. — Good-by, Julian.

[*She goes out, accompanied to the door by* JULIAN]

FELIX. Haven't you made some changes here?

JULIAN. Not to my knowledge. And how could you know anyhow? You have only been here two or three times.

FELIX. Yes. But the last time at one of the most important moments in my life. I came here to get your advice.

JULIAN. Well, everything has turned out in accordance with your wish. Even your father has resigned himself to it.

FELIX. Yes, he has resigned himself. Of course, he would have preferred to see me continue my technical studies. But now he has seen that it is quite possible to lead a sensible life in uniform too — without any debts or duels. In fact, my life is almost too smooth. However, there is at least more to anticipate for one of us than for most people. And that's always something.

JULIAN. And how are things at home?

FELIX. At home . . . Really, it's almost as if that word had lost its meaning.

JULIAN. Has your father resumed his duties again?

FELIX. Of course. Two days later he was back in his studio. He is wonderful. But I can't quite understand

[1] The palace of Mirabell is one of the sights of Salzburg, the city near the Bavarian border, where Felix's regiment was stationed. It is now used as a museum. The gardens adjoining it are of the formal type so dear to, and so characteristic of, the eighteenth century.

it. . . . Am I disturbing you, Mr. Fichtner? You were putting your papers in order, I think.

JULIAN. Oh, there's no hurry about that. They're easily put in order. Most of them I burn.

FELIX. Why?

JULIAN. It's more sensible, don't you think, to destroy things one hardly cares to look at any more?

FELIX. But doesn't it make you rather sad to clean out your past like that?

JULIAN. Sad? . . . No, it's entirely too natural a process for that.

FELIX. I can't see it that way. Look here. To burn a letter, or a picture, or something of that kind, immediately after you have got it — that seems quite natural to me. But something at all worthy of being kept as a remembrance of some poignant joy or equally poignant sorrow would seem incapable of ever losing its significance again. And especially in the case of a life like yours, that has been so rich and so active. . . . It would seem to me that at times you must feel something like — awe in the face of your own past.

JULIAN. Where do you get such thoughts — you, who are so young?

FELIX. They just came into my head this minute.

JULIAN. You are not so very much mistaken, perhaps. But there is something else besides, that makes me want to clean house. I am about to become homeless, so to speak.

FELIX. Why?

JULIAN. I'm giving up my rooms here, and don't know yet what my next step will be. And so I think it's more pleasant to let these things come to a decent end rather than to put them in a box and leave them to molder away in a cellar.

FELIX. But don't you feel sorry about a lot of it?

JULIAN. Oh, I don't know.

FELIX. And then you must have mementoes that mean something to other people besides yourself. Sketches of all kinds, for instance, which I think you have saved to some extent.

JULIAN. Are you thinking of those little things I showed you in Salzburg?

FELIX. Yes, of those too, of course.

JULIAN. They are still wrapped up. Would you like to have them?

FELIX. Indeed, I should feel very thankful. They seemed to have a particular charm for me. [*Pause*] But there's something else I wanted to ask of you. A great favor. If you will let me . . .

JULIAN. Tell me, please.

FELIX. I thought you might still have left a picture of my mother as a young girl. A small picture in water colors painted by yourself.

JULIAN. Yes, I did paint such a picture.

FELIX. And you have still got it?

JULIAN. I guess it can be found.

FELIX. I should like to see it.

JULIAN. Did your mother remember this picture . . . ?

FELIX. Yes, she mentioned it to me the last evening I ever saw her — the evening before she died. At the time I didn't imagine, of course, that the end was so near — and I don't think she could guess it either. To-day it seems rather peculiar to me that, on that very evening, she had to talk so much of days long gone by.

JULIAN. And of this little picture, too?

FELIX. It's a very good one, I understand.

JULIAN [*as if trying to remember*]. Where did I put it? Wait now. . . . [*He goes to a bookcase, the lower part of which has solid doors: these he opens, disclosing several shelves piled with portfolios*] I painted it in the country — in the little house where your grandparents used to live.

FELIX. I know.

JULIAN. You can hardly recall the old people, I suppose?

FELIX. Very vaguely. They were quite humble people, were they not?

JULIAN. Yes. [*He has taken a big portfolio from one of the shelves*] It ought to be in this portfolio. [*He puts it on the writing desk and opens it; then he sits down in front of it.* FELIX *stands behind him, looking over his shoulder*] Here is the house in which they lived — your grandparents and your mother. [*He goes through the sketches one by one*] And here is a view of the valley seen from the cemetery.

FELIX. In summer . . .

JULIAN. Yes. — And here is the little inn at which your father and I used to stop. . . . And here . . . [*He looks in silence at the sketch; both remain silent for a long while*]

FELIX [*picking up the sketch*]. How old was my mother at the time?

JULIAN [*who remains seated*]. Eighteen.

FELIX [*going a few steps away and leaning against the bookcase in order to get better light on the picture*]. A year before she was married, then.

JULIAN. It was done that very year. [*Pause*]

FELIX. What a strange look that meets me out of those eyes. . . . There's a smile on her lips. . . . It's almost as if she were talking to me. . . .

JULIAN. What was it your mother told you — that last evening?

FELIX. Not very much. But I feel as if I knew more than she had told me. What a queer thought it is, that as she is now looking at me out of this picture, so she must have been looking at you once. It seems as if there was a certain timidity in that look. Something like fear almost. . . . In such a way you look at people out of another world, for which you long, and of which you are afraid nevertheless.

JULIAN. At that time your mother had rarely been outside the village.

FELIX. She must have been different from all other women you have met, wasn't she? — Why don't you say anything? I am not one of those men who cannot understand — who won't understand that their mothers and sisters are women after all. I can easily understand that it must have been a dangerous time for her — and for somebody else as well. [*Very simply*] You must have loved my mother very much?

JULIAN. You have a curious way of asking questions. — Yes, I did love her.

FELIX. And those moments must have been very happy ones, when you sat in that little garden with its overgrown fence, holding this canvas on your knees, and out there on the bright meadow, among all those red and white flowers, stood this young girl with anxiously smiling eyes, holding her straw hat in one hand.

JULIAN. Your mother talked of those moments that last evening?

FELIX. Yes. — It is childish perhaps, but since then it has seemed impossible to me that any other human being could ever have meant so much to you as this one?

JULIAN [*more and more deeply moved, but speaking very quietly*]. I shall not answer you. — In the end I should instinctively be tempted to make myself appear better than I am. You know very well how I have lived my life — that it has not followed a regulated and direct course like the lives of most other people. I suppose that the gift of bestowing happiness of the kind that lasts, or of accepting it, has never been mine.

FELIX. That's what I feel. It is what I have always felt. Often with something like regret — or sorrow almost. But just people like you, who are destined by their very nature to have many and varied experiences — just such people should, I think, cling more faithfully and more gratefully to memories of a tender, peaceful sort, like this — rather than to more passionate and saddening memories. — Am I not right?

JULIAN. Maybe you are.

FELIX. My mother had never before mentioned this picture to me. Isn't it strange? . . . That last night she did it for the first time. — We were left alone on the veranda. The rest had already bid me good-by. . . . And all of a sudden she began to talk about those summer days of long, long ago. Her words had an undercurrent of meanings which she probably did not realize. I believe that her own youth, which she had almost ceased to understand, was unconsciously taking mine into its confidence. It moved me more deeply than I can tell you. — Much as she cared for me, she had never before talked to me like that. And I believe that she had never been quite so dear to me as in those last moments. — And when finally I had to leave, I felt that she had still much more to tell me. — Now you'll understand why I had such a longing to see this picture. — I have almost the feeling that it might go on talking to me as my mother would have done — if I had only dared to ask her one more question!

JULIAN. Ask it now. . . . Do ask it, Felix. [FELIX, *who becomes aware of the emotion betrayed in the voice of* JULIAN, *looks up from the picture*] I believe that it can still tell you a great many things.

FELIX. What is the matter?

JULIAN. Do you want to keep that picture?

FELIX. Why . . . ?

JULIAN. Well . . . take it. I don't give it to you. As soon as I have settled down again, I shall want it back. But you shall have a look at it whenever you want. And I hope matters will be so

arranged that you won't have far to go either.

FELIX [*with his eyes on the picture*]. It grows more alive every second. . . . And that look was directed at you . . . That look . . . ? Can it be possible that I read it right?

JULIAN. Mothers have their adventures, too, like other women.

FELIX. Yes, indeed, I believe it has nothing more to hide from me.

[*He puts down the picture. Then a long pause follows. At last* FELIX *puts on his coat*]

JULIAN. Are you not going to take it along?

FELIX. Not just now. It belongs to you much more than I could guess.

JULIAN. And to you . . .

FELIX. No, I don't want it until this new thing has become fully revealed to me. [*He looks* JULIAN *firmly in the eyes*] I don't quite know where I am. In reality, of course, there has been no change whatever. None — except that I know now what I . . .

JULIAN. Felix!

FELIX. No, that was something I could never have guessed. [*Looks long at* JULIAN *with an expression of mingled tenderness and curiosity*] Farewell.

JULIAN. Are you going?

FELIX. I need badly to be by myself for a while. — Until to-morrow.

JULIAN. Yes, and no longer, Felix. To-morrow I shall come to your — I'll call on *you*, Felix.

FELIX. I shall be waiting for you.

[*He goes out.* JULIAN *stands quite still for a moment; then he goes to the writing desk and stops beside it, lost in contemplation of the picture*]

ACT III

A room at the WEGRATS', *adjoining the veranda. The outlook is, of course, determined by the location.*

JOHANNA *is seated on a stool with her hands folded in her lap*

SALA [*enters*]. Good morning, Johanna.

JOHANNA [*rises, goes to meet him, and draws him close to herself*]. Are you coming for the last time?

SALA. For the last time? What an idea! There has not been the slightest change in our arrangements. To-day is the seventh of October, and the ship will leave Genoa on the twenty-sixth of November.

JOHANNA. Some day you will suddenly have disappeared. And I shall be standing by the garden door, and nobody will come to open it.

SALA. But that sort of thing is not needed between us two.

JOHANNA. No, indeed — bear that in mind.

FELIX [*enters*]. Oh, is that you, Mr. von Sala? [*They shake hands*] Well, how far have you got with your preparations?

SALA. There are hardly any needed. I shall pack my trunk, pull down the shades, lock the doors — and be off for the mysteries of far-away. There is something I want to ask you apropos of that, Felix. Would you care to come along?

FELIX [*startled*]. If I care . . . Are you asking seriously, Mr. von Sala?

SALA. There is just so much seriousness in my question as you wish to put into it.

FELIX. What does it mean anyhow? If I want to go along to Asia? What use could they have for me in a venture of that kind?

SALA. Oh, that's pretty plain.

FELIX. Is the expedition not going to be one of purely scientific character?

SALA. Yes, that's what it is meant for, I suppose. But it is quite possible that various things may happen that would make the presence of some young men like you very desirable.

FELIX. Men like me . . . ?

SALA. When Rolston went out there seven years ago, a lot of things happened which were not provided for in the original program. And they had to fight a regular battle, on a small scale, in the Kara-Kum district, not far from the river Amu-Daria.

REUMANN [*who has entered while* SALA *was speaking*]. To those who had to stay behind forever the scale of your battle was probably large enough. [*All greet each other and shake hands without letting the conversation be interrupted*]

SALA. In that respect you are probably right, Doctor.

FELIX. Pardon me, Mr. von Sala, but does this come from you alone? Is it just a sudden notion — or something more?

SALA. I have received no direct request from anybody to speak of this. But after the conference which took

place at the Foreign Department yesterday, and which I attended, I feel entitled to add a little more. — Oh, no secrets at all! — You have probably read, Felix, that a member of the General Staff as well as several artillery and engineering officers are being sent with us in what might be termed a semi-official capacity. On account of the latest news from Asia — which, however, does not seem very reliable to me, as it has come by way of England — it has been decided to secure the additional coöperation of some young line officers, and all arrangements of this kind must be left to private initiative.

FELIX. And there might be a possibility for me . . . ?

SALA. Will you permit me to speak to Count Ronsky?

FELIX. Have you already mentioned my name to him?

SALA. I have received permission to ask whether you could be prepared to board the ship with the rest at Genoa on the twenty-sixth of November.

REUMANN. Do you mean to leave Vienna as soon as that?

SALA [*sarcastically*]. Yes. Why did you look at me like that, Doctor? That glance of yours was a little indiscreet.

REUMANN. In what respect?

SALA. It seemed to say: Yes, you can start, of course, but if you ever come back, that's more than doubtful.

REUMANN. Let me tell you, Mr. von Sala, that in the face of a venture like yours one might well express such doubts quite openly. But are you at all interested in whether you get back or not, Mr. von Sala? I don't suppose you belong to the kind of people who care to put their affairs in order.

SALA. No, indeed. Especially not as, in cases of that kind, it is generally the affairs of others which give you needless trouble. If I were to be interested at all in my own chances, it would be for much more selfish reasons.

JOHANNA. What reasons?

SALA. I don't want to be cheated out of the consciousness that certain moments are my final ones.

REUMANN. There are not many people who share your attitude in that respect.

SALA. At any rate, Doctor, you would have to tell me the absolute truth if I ever asked you for it. I hold that one has the right to drain one's own life to the last drop, with all the horrors and delights that may lie hidden at the bottom of it. Just as it is our evident duty every day to commit every good deed and every rascality lying within our capacity. . . . No, I won't let you rob me of my death moments by any kind of hocus-pocus. It would imply a small-minded attitude, worthy neither of yourself nor of me. — Well, Felix, the twenty-sixth of November then! That's still seven weeks off. In regard to any formalities that may be required, you need have no worry at all.

FELIX. How long a time have I got to make up my mind?

SALA. There's no reason to be precipitate. When does your furlough end?

FELIX. To-morrow night.

SALA. Of course, you are going to talk it over with your father?

FELIX. With my father. . . . Yes, of course. — At any rate I'll bring you the answer early to-morrow morning, Mr. von Sala.

SALA. Fine. It would please me very much. But you must bear in mind: it will be no picnic. I expect to see you soon, then. Good-by, Miss Johanna. Farewell, Doctor.

[*He goes out. A brief pause. Those left behind show signs of emotion*]

JOHANNA [*rising*]. I'm going to my room. Good-by, Doctor. [*She goes out*]

REUMANN. Have you made up your mind, Felix?

FELIX. Almost.

REUMANN. You'll come across much that is new to you.

FELIX. And my own self among it, I hope — which would be about time. . . . [*Quoting*] "The mysteries of far-away . . . " And will it really come true? Oh, the thrill of it!

REUMANN. And yet you ask time to consider?

FELIX. I hardly know why. And yet . . . The thought of leaving people behind and perhaps never seeing them again — and certainly not as they were when you left them; the thought, too, that perhaps your going will hurt them . . .

REUMANN. If nothing else makes you hesitate, then every moment of uncertainty is wasted. Nothing is more sure to estrange you from those dear to you than the knowledge that

duty condemns you to stay near them. You must seize this unique opportunity. You must go to see Genoa, Asia Minor, Thibet, Bactria. . . . Oh, it must be splendid! And my best wishes will go with you. [*He gives his hand to* FELIX]

FELIX. Thank you. But there will be plenty of time for wishes of that kind. Whatever may be decided, we shall meet more than once before I leave.

REUMANN. I hope so. Oh, of course!

FELIX [*looking hard at him*]. Doctor . . . it seems to me there was a final farewell in that pressure of your hand.

REUMANN [*with a smile*]. Is it ever possible to tell whether you will meet again?

FELIX. Tell me, Doctor — did Mr. von Sala interpret your glance correctly?

REUMANN. That has nothing to do with your case anyhow.

FELIX. Will he not be able to go with us?

REUMANN [*with hesitation*]. That's very hard to predict.

FELIX. You have never learned to lie, Doctor.

REUMANN. As the matter stands now, I think you can bring it to a successful conclusion without further assistance.

FELIX. Mr. von Sala called on you a few days ago?

REUMANN. Yes, it was only a while ago. [*Pause*] Well, you can see for yourself that he is not well, can't you? — So God be with you, Felix.

FELIX. Will you continue to befriend this house when I am gone?

REUMANN. Why do you ask questions like that, Felix?

FELIX. You don't mean to come here again? — But why?

REUMANN. I assure you . . .

FELIX. I understand . . .

REUMANN [*embarrassed*]. What can there be to understand . . . ?

FELIX. My dear Doctor . . . I know now . . . why you don't want to come to this house any more. . . . It's another case of somebody else breaking his neck. . . . Dear friend . . .

REUMANN. Good luck to you . . . Felix . . .

FELIX. And if anybody should call you back . . .

REUMANN. Nobody will. . . . But if I should be *needed*, I can always be found . . .

[JOHANNA *comes into the room again*]

REUMANN. Good-by . . . Good-by, Miss Johanna . . .

JOHANNA. Are you going already, Doctor?

REUMANN. Yes. . . . Give my regards to your father. Good-by. . . . [*He shakes her hand*]

JOHANNA [*calmly*]. Did he tell you that Sala is doomed?

[FELIX *hesitates about what to say*] I knew it. [*With an odd gesture of deprecation as* FELIX *wants to say something*] And you are going — with or without him?

FELIX. Yes. [*Pause*] There won't be much doing in this place after this.

[JOHANNA *remains unmoved*]

And how are you going to live, Johanna? . . . I mean, how are the two of you going to live — you and father? [JOHANNA *gives him a look as if his question surprised her*] He is going to be lonely. I think he would feel very grateful if you took a little more interest in him — if you went for a walk for him when there is time for it. And you, too . . .

JOHANNA [*brusquely*]. How could that help me or him? What can he be to me or I to him? I was not made to assist people in days of trial. I can't help it, but that's the way I am. I seem to be stirred by a sort of hostility against people who appeal to my pity. I felt it like that all the time mother was sick.

FELIX. No, you were not made for that. . . . But what were you made for then?

[JOHANNA *shrugs her shoulders and sits down as before, with hands folded in her lap and her eyes staring straight ahead*]

Johanna, why do you never talk to me any more as you used to? Have you, then, nothing to tell me? Don't you remember how we used to tell each other everything?

JOHANNA. That was long ago. We were children then.

FELIX. Why can't you talk to me any longer as you did then? Have you forgotten how well we two used to understand each other? How we used to confide all our secrets to each other? What good chums we used to be? . . . How we wanted to go out into the wide world together?

JOHANNA. Into the wide world.

. . . Oh, yes, I remember. But there is nothing left now of all those words of wonder and romance.

FELIX. Perhaps it depends on ourselves only.

JOHANNA. No, those words have no longer the same meaning as before.

FELIX. What do you mean?

JOHANNA. Into the wide world . . .

FELIX. What is the matter, Johanna?

JOHANNA. Once, when we were in the museum together, I saw a picture of which I often think. It has a meadow with knights and ladies in it — and a forest, a vineyard, an inn, and young men and women dancing, and a big city with churches and towers and bridges. And soldiers are marching across the bridges, and a ship is gliding down the river. And farther back there is a hill, and on that hill a castle, and lofty mountains in the extreme distance. And clouds are floating above the mountains, and there is mist on the meadow, and a flood of sunlight is pouring down on the city, and a storm is raging over the castle, and there is ice and snow on the mountains. — And when anybody spoke of "the wide world," or I read that term anywhere, I used always to think of that picture. And it used to be the same with so many other big-sounding words. Fear was a tiger with cavernous mouth — love was a page with long light curls kneeling at the feet of a lady — death was a beautiful young man with black wings and a sword in his hand — and fame was blaring bugles, men with bent backs, and a road strewn with flowers. In those days it was possible to talk of all sorts of things, Felix. But to-day everything has a different look — fame, and death, and love, and the wide world.

FELIX [*hesitatingly*]. I feel a little scared on your behalf, Johanna.

JOHANNA. Why, Felix?

FELIX. Johanna! — I wish you wouldn't do anything to worry father.

JOHANNA. Does that depend on me alone?

FELIX. I know in what direction your dreams are going, Johanna. — What is to come out of that?

JOHANNA. Is it necessary that something comes out of everything? — I think, Felix, that many people are destined to mean nothing to each other but a common memory.

FELIX. You have said it yourself, Johanna — that you are not made to see other people suffer.

[JOHANNA *shrinks slightly at those words*]

FELIX. Suffer . . . and . . .

JULIAN [*enters*]. How are you? [*He shakes hands with* FELIX]

JOHANNA [*who has risen*]. Mr. Fichtner. [*She holds out her hand to him*]

JULIAN. I could hardly recognize you, Johanna. You have grown into a young lady now. — Has your father not come home yet?

JOHANNA. He hasn't gone out yet. He has nothing to do at the Academy until twelve.

JULIAN. I suppose he's in his studio?

JOHANNA. I'll call him.

[JULIAN *looks around. As* JOHANNA *is about to leave the room,* WEGRAT *enters, carrying his hat and stick*]

WEGRAT [*giving his hand to* JULIAN]. I'm delighted, my dear fellow.

JULIAN. I heard of it only after my arrival here yesterday — through Sala. I don't need to tell you . . .

WEGRAT. Thank you very much for your sympathy. I thank you with all my heart. — But sit down, please.

JULIAN. You were going out?

WEGRAT. Oh, it's no hurry. I have nothing to do in the Academy until twelve. Johanna, will you please get a carriage for me, just to be on the safe side?

[JOHANNA *goes out.* WEGRAT *seats himself, as does* JULIAN. FELIX *stands leaning against the glazed oven*]

Well, you stayed away quite a while this time.

JULIAN. More than two years.

WEGRAT. If you had only got here ten days earlier, you could have had a last look at her. It came so very suddenly — although it wasn't unexpected.

JULIAN. So I have heard.

WEGRAT. And now you are going to stay right here, I suppose?

JULIAN. A little while. How long I am not yet able to tell.

WEGRAT. Of course not. The making of schedules has never been your line.

JULIAN. No, I have a certain disinclination for that kind of thing. [*Pause*]

WEGRAT. Oh, mercy, my dear fellow . . . how often have I not been thinking of you recently!

JULIAN. And I . . .

WEGRAT. No, you haven't had much chance for it. . . . But I . . . As I enter the building where I now hold office and authority, I remember often how we two young chaps used to sit side by side in the model class, full of a thousand plans and hopes.

JULIAN. Why do you say that in such a melancholy tone? A lot of those things have come true, haven't they?

WEGRAT. Some — yes . . . And yet one can't help wanting to be young again, even at the risk of similar sorrows and struggles . . .

JULIAN. And even at the risk of also having to live through a lot of nice things over again.

WEGRAT. Indeed, those are the hardest things to bear, once they have turned into memories. — You have been in Italy again?

JULIAN. Yes, in Italy too.

WEGRAT. It's a long time now since I was there. Since we made that walk together through the Ampezzo Valley,[1] with the pack on our backs — to Pieve, and then right on to Venice. Can you remember? The sun has never again shone as brightly as it did then.

JULIAN. That must have been almost thirty years ago.

WEGRAT. No, not quite. You were already pretty well known at the time. You had just finished your splendid picture of Irene Herms. It was the year before I married.

JULIAN. Yes, yes. [*Pause*]

WEGRAT. Do you still recall the summer morning when you went with me to Kirchau for the first time?

JULIAN. Of course.

WEGRAT. How the light buggy carried us through the wide, sun-steeped valley? And do you remember the little garden at Hügelhang, where you became acquainted with Gabrielle and her parents?

FELIX [*with suppressed emotion*]. Father, is the house in which mother used to live still standing?

WEGRAT. No, it's gone long ago. They have built a villa on the spot. Five or six years ago, you know, we went there for the last time to visit the graves of your grandparents. Everything has been changed, except the cemetery. . . . [*To* JULIAN] Can you still remember that cool, cloudy afternoon, Julian, when we sat on the lower wall of the cemetery and had such a remarkable talk about the future?

JULIAN. I remember the day very clearly. But I have entirely forgotten what we were talking about.

WEGRAT. Just what we said has passed out of my mind, too, but I can still remember what an extraordinary talk it was. . . . In some way the world seemed to open up more widely. And I felt something like envy toward you, as I often did in those days. There rose within me a feeling that I, too, could do anything — if I only wanted. There was so much to be seen and experienced — and the flow of life was irresistible. Nothing would be needed but a little more nerve, a little more self-assurance, and then to plunge in. . . . Yes, that was what I felt while you were talking. . . . And then Gabrielle came toward us along the narrow road from the village, between the acacias. She carried her straw hat in her hand, and she nodded to me. And all my dreams of the future centered in her after that, and once more the whole world seemed fitted into a frame, and yet it was big and beautiful enough. . . . Why does the color all of a sudden come back into those things? It was practically forgotten, all of it, and now, when she is dead, it comes to life again with a glow that almost scares me. . . . Oh, it were better not to think of it at all. What's the use? What's the use? [*Pause; he goes to one of the windows*]

JULIAN [*struggling to overcome his embarrassment*]. It is both wise and brave of you to resume your regular activities so promptly.

WEGRAT. Oh, once you have made up your mind to go on living . . . There is nothing but work that can help you through this sense of being alone — of being *left* alone.

JULIAN. It seems to me that your grief makes you a little unjust toward — much that is still yours.

WEGRAT. Unjust . . .? Oh, I didn't mean to. I hope you don't feel hurt, children . . . ! Felix, you understand me fully, don't you? There is so much, from the very beginning, that draws — that lures — that tears the young ones away from us. We have to

[1] One of the main routes through the Dolomites, leading from Southern Tirol into Italy. It is in part identical with the route outlined by Albert in "Intermezzo", but parts from it at Cortina to run straight south.

struggle to keep our children almost from the very moment they arrive — and the struggle is a pretty hopeless one at that. But that's the way of life: they cannot possibly belong to us. And as far as other people are concerned . . . Even our friends come into our lives only as guests who rise from the table when they have eaten, and walk out. Like us, they have their own streets, their own affairs. And it's quite natural it should be so. . . . Which doesn't prevent us from feeling pleased, Julian — sincerely pleased, when one of them finds his way back to us. Especially if it be one on whom we have put great store throughout life. You may be sure of that, Julian. [*They shake hands*] And as long as you remain in Vienna, I shall see you here quite often, I trust. It will give me genuine pleasure.

JULIAN. I'll be sure to come.

MAID [*enters*]. The carriage is here, Professor. [*She goes out*]

WEGRAT. I'm coming. [*To* JULIAN] You must have a lot to tell me. You were as good as lost. You understand it will interest me to hear all you have done — and still more what you intend to do. Felix told us the other day about some very interesting sketches you had showed him.

JULIAN. I'll go with you, if you care to have me.

WEGRAT. Thanks. But it would be still nicer of you to stay right here and take dinner with us.

JULIAN. Well . . .

WEGRAT. I'll be through very quickly. To-day I have nothing but a few business matters to dispose of — nothing but signing a few documents. I'll be back in three-quarters of an hour. In the meantime the children will keep you company as they used to in the old days. . . . Won't you, children? — So you're staying, are you not? Good-by for a little while then. [*He goes out*]

[*Long pause*]

FELIX. Why didn't you go with him?

JULIAN. Your mother was without blame. If any there be, it falls on me alone. I'll tell you all about it.

FELIX [*nods*].

JULIAN. It had been arranged that we were to go away together. Everything was ready. We meant to leave the place secretly because, quite naturally, your mother shrank from any kind of statement or explanation. Our intention was to write and explain after we had been gone a few days. The hour of our start had already been settled. He . . . who later became her husband, had just gone to Vienna for a couple of days in order to get certain documents. The wedding was to take place in a week. [*Pause*] Our plans were all made. We had agreed on everything. The carriage that was to pick us up a little ways off had already been hired. In the evening we bade each other good-night, fully convinced that we should meet next morning, never to part again. — It turned out differently. — You mustn't keep in mind that it was your mother. You must listen to me as if my story dealt with perfect strangers. . . . Then you can understand everything.

FELIX. I am listening.

JULIAN. I had come to Kirchau in June, one beautiful summer morning — with him. . . . You know about that, don't you? I meant to stay only a few days. But I stayed on and on. More than once I tried to get away while it was still time. But I stayed. [*Smiling*] And with fated inevitability we slipped into sin, happiness, doom, betrayal — and dreams. Yes, indeed, there was more of those than of anything else. And after that last farewell, meant to be for a night only — as I got back to the little inn and started to make things ready for our journey — only then did I for the first time become really conscious of what had happened and was about to happen. Actually, it was almost as if I had just waked up. Only then, in the stillness of that night, as I was standing at the open window, did it grow clear to me that next morning an hour would come by which my whole future must be determined. And then I began to feel . . . as if faint shiverings had been streaming down my body. Below me I could see the stretch of road along which I had just come. It ran on and on through the country, climbing the hills that cut off the view, and losing itself in the open, the limitless. . . . It led to thousands of unknown and invisible roads, all of which at that moment remained at my disposal. It seemed to me as if my future, radiant with glory and adventure, lay waiting for me behind those hills — but for me alone. Life was mine — but only this one life. And in order to seize it and enjoy it fully — in order to live it as it

had been shaped for me by fate — I needed the carelessness and freedom I had enjoyed until then. And I marveled almost at my own readiness to give away the recklessness of my youth and the fullness of my existence. . . . And to what purpose? — For the sake of a passion which, after all, despite its ardor and its transports, had begun like many others, and would be destined to end like all of them.

FELIX. Destined to end . . . ? *Must* come to an end?

JULIAN. Yes. Must. The moment I foresaw the end, I had in a measure reached it. To wait for something that must come, means to go through it a thousand times — to go through it helplessly and needlessly and resentfully. This I felt acutely at that moment. And it frightened me. At the same time I felt clearly that I was about to act like a brute and a traitor toward a human being who had given herself to me in full confidence. — But everything seemed more desirable — not only for me, but for her also — than a slow, miserable, unworthy decline. And all my scruples were submerged in a monstrous longing to go on with my life as before, without duties or ties. There wasn't much time left for consideration. And I was glad of it. I had made up my mind. I didn't wait for the morning. Before the stars had set, I was off.

FELIX. You ran away. . . .

JULIAN. Call it anything you please. — Yes, it was a flight, just as good and just as bad, just as precipitate and just as cowardly as any other — with all the horrors of being pursued and all the joys of escaping. I am hiding nothing from you, Felix. You are still young, and it is even possible that you may understand it better than I can understand it myself to-day. Nothing pulled me back. No remorse stirred within me. The sense of being free filled me with intoxication. . . . At the end of the first day I was already far away — much farther than any number of milestones could indicate. On that first day her image began to fade away already — the image of her who had waked up to meet painful disillusionment, or worse maybe. The ring of her voice was passing out of my memory. . . . She was becoming a shadow like others that had been left floating much farther behind me in the past.

FELIX. Oh, it isn't true! So quickly could she not be forgotten. So remorselessly could you not go out in the world. All this is meant as a sort of expiation. You make yourself appear what you are not.

JULIAN. I am not telling you these things to accuse or defend myself. I am simply telling you the truth. And you must hear it. It was your mother, and I am the man who deserted her. And there is something more I am compelled to tell you. On the very time that followed my flight I must look back as the brightest and richest of any I have ever experienced. Never before or after have I reveled to such an extent in the splendid consciousness of my youth and my freedom from restraint. Never have I been so wholly master of my gifts and of my life. . . . Never have I been a happier man than I was at that very time.

FELIX [*calmly*]. And if she had killed herself?

JULIAN. I believe I should have thought myself worth it — in those days.

FELIX. And so you were, perhaps, at that time. — And she thought of doing it, I am sure. She wanted to put an end to the lies and the qualms, just as hundreds of thousands of girls have done before. But millions fail to do it, and they are the most sensible ones. And I am sure she also thought of telling the truth to him she took to husband. But, of course, the way through life is easier when you don't have to carry a burden of reproach or, what is worse, of forgiveness.

JULIAN. And if she had spoken . . .

FELIX. Oh, I understand why she didn't. It had been of no use to anybody. And so she kept silent: silent when she got back from the wedding — silent when her child was born — silent when, ten years later, the lover came to her husband's house again — silent to the very last. . . . Fates of that kind are to be found everywhere, and it isn't even necessary to be — depraved, in order to suffer them or invoke them.

JULIAN. And there are mighty few whom it behooves to judge — or to condemn.

FELIX. I don't presume to do so. And it doesn't even occur to me that I am now to behold deceivers and deceived where, a few hours ago, I could only see people who were dear to me and whose relationships to each other were perfectly pure. And it is abso-

lutely impossible for me to feel myself another man than I have deemed myself until to-day. There is no power in all this truth. . . . A vivid dream would be more compelling than this story out of bygone days, which you have just told me. Nothing has changed — nothing whatever. The thought of my mother is as sacred to me as ever. And the man in whose house I was born and raised, who surrounded my childhood and youth with care and tenderness, and whom my mother — loved . . . He means just as much to me now as he has ever meant — and perhaps a little more.

JULIAN. And yet, Felix, however powerless this truth may seem to you — there is one thing you can take hold of in this moment of doubt: it was as my son your mother gave birth to you . . .

FELIX. At a time when you had run away from her.

JULIAN. And as my son she brought you up.

FELIX. In hatred of you.

JULIAN. At first. Later in forgiveness, and finally — don't forget it — in friendship toward me. . . . And what was in her mind that last night? — Of what did she talk to you? — Of those days when she experienced the greatest happiness that can fall to the share of any woman.

FELIX. As well as the greatest misery.

JULIAN. Do you think it was mere chance which brought those very days back to her mind that last evening? . . . Don't you think she knew that you would go to me and ask for that picture? . . . And do you think your wish to see it could have any other meaning than of a final greeting to me from your mother? . . . Can't you understand that, Felix? . . . And in this moment — don't try to resist — you have it before your eyes — that picture you held in your hand yesterday: and your mother is looking at you. — And the glance resting on you, Felix, is the same one that rested on me that passionate and sacred day when she fell into my arms and you were conceived. — And whatever you may feel of doubt or confusion, the truth has now been revealed to you once for all. Thus your mother willed it, and it is no longer possible for you to forget that you are my son.

FELIX. Your son. . . . That's nothing but a word. And it's cried in a desert. — Although I am looking at you now, and although I know that I am your son, I can't grasp it.

JULIAN. Felix . . . !

FELIX. Since I learned of this, you have become a stranger to me. [*He turns away*]

ACT IV

The garden belonging to MR. VON SALA'S *house. At the left is seen the white, one-storied building, fronted by a broad terrace, from which six stone steps lead down into the garden. A wide door with panes of glass leads from the terrace into the drawing-room. A small pool appears in the foreground, surrounded by a semi-circle of young trees. From that spot an avenue of trees runs diagonally across the stage toward the right. At the opening of the avenue, near the pool, stand two columns on which are placed the marble busts of two Roman emperors. A semi-circular stone seat with back support stands under the trees to the right of the pool. Farther back glimpses of the glittering fence are caught through the scanty leafage. Back of the fence, the woods on a gently rising hillside are turning red. The autumnal sky is pale blue. Everything is quiet. The stage remains empty for a few moments.*

SALA *and* JOHANNA *enter by way of the terrace. She is in black. He has on a gray suit and carries a dark overcoat across his shoulders. They descend the steps slowly.*

SALA. I think you'll find it rather cool. [*He goes back into the room, picks up a cape lying there, and puts it around* JOHANNA'S *shoulders; little by little they reach the garden*]

JOHANNA. Do you know what I imagine? . . . That this day is our own — that it belongs to us alone. We have summoned it, and if we wanted, we could make it stay. . . . All other people live only as guests in the world to-day. Isn't that so? . . . The reason is, I suppose, that once I heard you speak of this day.

SALA. Of this . . .?

JOHANNA. Yes — while mother was still living. . . . And now it has really come. The leaves are red. The golden

mist is lying over the woods. The sky is pale and remote — and the day is even more beautiful, and sadder, than I could ever have imagined. And I am spending it in your garden, and your pool is my mirror. [*She stands looking down into the pool*] And yet we can no more make it stay, this golden day, than the water here can hold my image after I have gone away.

SALA. It seems strange that this clear, mild air should be tinged with a suggestion of winter and snow.

JOHANNA. Why should it trouble you? When that suggestion has become reality here, you are already in the midst of another spring.

SALA. What do you mean by that?

JOHANNA. Oh, I suppose that where you go they have no winter like ours.

SALA [*pensively*]. No, not like ours. [*Pause*] And you?

JOHANNA. I . . . ?

SALA. What are you going to do, I mean, when I am gone?

JOHANNA. When you are gone . . . ? [*She looks at him, and he stands staring into the distance*] Haven't you gone long ago? And at bottom, are you not far away from me even now?

SALA. What are you saying? I am here with you. . . . What are you going to do, Johanna?

JOHANNA. I have already told you. Go away — just like you.

[SALA *shakes his head*]

JOHANNA. As soon as possible. I have still the courage left. Who knows what may become of me later, if I stay here alone.

SALA. As long as you are young, all doors stand open, and the world begins outside every one of them.

JOHANNA. But the world is wide and the sky infinite only as long as you are not clinging to anybody. And for that reason I want to go away.

SALA. Away — that's so easily said. But preparations are needed for that purpose, and some sort of a scheme. You use the word as if you merely had to put on wings and fly off into the distance.

JOHANNA. To be determined is — the same as having wings.

SALA. Are you not at all afraid, Johanna?

JOHANNA. A longing free from fear would be too cheap to be worth while.

SALA. Where will it lead you?

JOHANNA. I shall find my way.

SALA. You can choose your way, but not the people that you meet.

JOHANNA. Do you think me ignorant of the fact that I cannot expect only beautiful experiences? What is ugly and mean must also be waiting for me.

SALA. And how are you going to stand it? — Will you be able to stand it at all?

JOHANNA. Of course, I am not going to tell the truth always as I have done to you. I shall have to lie — and I think of it with pleasure. I shall not always be in good spirits, nor always sensible. I shall make mistakes and suffer. That's the way it has to be, I suppose.

SALA. Of all this you are aware in advance, and yet . . . ?

JOHANNA. Yes.

SALA. And why? . . . Why are you going away, Johanna?

JOHANNA. Why am I going away? . . . I want a time to come when I must shudder at myself. Shudder as deeply as you can only when nothing has been left untried. Just as you have had to do when you looked back upon your life. Or have you not?

SALA. Oh, many times. But just in such moments of shuddering there is nothing left behind at all — everything is once more present. And the present is the past. [*He sits down on the stone seat*]

JOHANNA. What do you mean by that?

[SALA *covers his eyes with his hand and sits silent*]

What is the matter? Where are you anyhow?

[*A light wind stirs the leaves and makes many of them drop to the ground*]

SALA. I am a child, riding my pony across the fields. My father is behind and calls to me. At that window waits my mother. She has thrown a gray satin shawl over her dark hair and is waving her hand at me. . . . And I am a young lieutenant in maneuvers, standing on a hillock and reporting to my colonel that hostile infantry is ambushed behind that wooded piece of ground, ready to charge, and down below us I can see the midday sun glittering on bayonets and buttons. . . . And I am lying alone in my boat adrift, looking up into the deep-blue summer sky, while words of incomprehensible beauty are shaping themselves in my mind —

words more beautiful than I have ever been able to put on paper. . . . And I am resting on a bench in the cool park at the lake of Lugano, with Helen sitting beside me; she holds a book with red cover in her hand; over there by the magnolia, Lillie is playing with the light-haired English boy, and I can hear them prattling and laughing. . . . And I am walking slowly back and forth with Julian on a bed of rustling leaves, and we are talking of a picture which we saw yesterday. And I see the picture: two old sailors with worn-out faces, who are seated on an overturned skiff, their sad eyes directed toward the boundless sea. And I feel their misery more deeply than the artist who painted them; more deeply than they could have felt it themselves, had they been alive. . . . All this — all of it is there — if I only close my eyes. It is nearer to me than you, Johanna, when I don't see you and you keep quiet.

[JOHANNA *stands looking at him with wistful sympathy*]

The present — what does it mean anyhow? Are we then locked breast to breast with the moment as with a friend whom we embrace — or an enemy who is pressing us? Has not the word that just rings out turned to memory already? Is not the note that starts a melody reduced to memory before the song is ended? Is your coming to this garden anything but a memory, Johanna? Are not your steps across that meadow as much a matter of the past as are the steps of creatures dead these many years?

JOHANNA. No, it mustn't be like that. It makes me sad.

SALA [*with a return to present things*]. Why? . . . It shouldn't, Johanna. It is in hours like those we know, that we have lost nothing, and that in reality we cannot lose anything.

JOHANNA. Oh, I wish you had lost and forgotten everything, so that I might be everything to you!

SALA [*somewhat astonished*]. Johanna . . .

JOHANNA [*passionately*]. I love you. [*Pause*]

SALA. In a few days I shall be gone, Johanna. You know it — you have known it right along.

JOHANNA. I know. Why do you repeat it? Do you think, perhaps, that all at once I may begin to clutch at you like a love-sick thing, dreaming of eternities? — No, that isn't my way — oh, no! . . . But I want to tell you once at least that I am fond of you. May I not for once? — Do you hear? I love you. And I wish that sometime later on you may hear it just as I am saying it now — at some other moment no less beautiful than this — when we two shall no longer be aware of each other.

SALA. Indeed, Johanna, of one thing you may be sure: that the sound of your voice shall never leave me. — But why should we talk of parting forever? Perhaps we shall meet again sooner or later . . . in three years . . . or in five . . . [*With a smile*] Then you have become a princess perhaps, and I may be the ruler of some buried city. . . . Why don't you speak?

[JOHANNA *pulls the cape more closely about her*]

Do you feel cold?

JOHANNA. Not at all. — But now I must go.

SALA. Are you in such a hurry?

JOHANNA. It is getting late. I must be back before my father gets home.

SALA. How strange! To-day you are hurrying home, fearful of being too late, lest your father get worried. And in a couple of days . . .

JOHANNA. Then he will no longer be waiting for me. Farewell, Stephan.

SALA. Until to-morrow, then.

JOHANNA. Yes, until to-morrow.

SALA. You'll come through the garden gate, of course?

JOHANNA. Wasn't that a carriage that stopped before the house?

SALA. The doors are locked. Nobody can get out into the garden.

JOHANNA. Good-by, then.

SALA. Until to-morrow.

JOHANNA. Yes. [*She is about to go*]

SALA. Listen, Johanna. — If I should say to you now: stay!

JOHANNA. No, I must go now.

SALA. That was not what I meant.

JOHANNA. What then?

SALA. I mean, if I should beg you to stay — for — a long time?

JOHANNA. You have a peculiar way of jesting.

SALA. I am not jesting.

JOHANNA. Do you forget, then, that you — are going away?

SALA. I am not bound in any respect. There is nothing to prevent me from staying at home if I don't feel like going away.

JOHANNA. For my sake?

SALA. I didn't say so. Maybe for my own sake.

JOHANNA. No, you mustn't give it up. You would never forgive me if I took that away from you.

SALA. Oh, you think so? [*Watching her closely*] And if both of us were to go?

JOHANNA. What?

SALA. If you should risk going along with me? Well, it takes a little courage to do it, of course. But you would probably not be the only woman. The Baroness Golobin is also going along, I hear.

JOHANNA. Are you talking seriously?

SALA. Quite seriously. I ask if you care to go with me on that journey . . . as my wife, of course, seeing that we have to consider externals like that, too.

JOHANNA. I should . . . ?

SALA. Why does that move you so deeply?

JOHANNA. With you? — With you . . . ?

SALA. Don't misunderstand me, Johanna. That's no reason why you should be tied to me for all time. When we get back, we can bid each other good-by — without the least ado. It is a very simple matter. For all your dreams cannot be fulfilled by me — I know that very well. . . . You need not give me an answer at once. Hours like these turn too easily into words that are not true the next day. And I hope I may never hear you speak one word of that kind.

JOHANNA [*who has been looking at* SALA *as if she wanted to drink up every one of his words*]. No, I am not saying anything — I am not saying anything.

SALA [*looking long at her*]. You are going to think it over, and you'll let me know to-morrow morning?

JOHANNA. Yes. [*She looks long at him*]

SALA. What is the matter?

JOHANNA. Nothing. — Until to-morrow. Farewell. [*He accompanies her to the garden gate, through which she disappears*]

SALA [*comes back and stands looking into the pool*]. Just as if I wanted to find her image in it. . . . What could it be that moved her so deeply? . . . Happiness? . . . No, it wasn't happiness. . . . Why did she look at me like that? Why did she seem to shrink? There was something in her glance like a farewell forever. [*He makes a sudden movement as of fright*] Has it come to that with me? . . . But how can she know? . . . Then others must know it too . . . ! [*He stands staring into space; then he ascends the terrace slowly and goes into the drawing-room, from which he returns a few moments later accompanied by* JULIAN]

JULIAN. And you want to leave all these splendors so soon?

SALA. They'll be here when I come back, I hope.

JULIAN. I hope you will, for the sake of both of us.

SALA. You say that rather distrustingly. . . .

JULIAN. Well, yes — I am thinking of that remarkable article in the *Daily Post*.

SALA. Concerning what?

JULIAN. What is going on at the Caspian Sea.

SALA. Oh, are the local papers also taking that up?

JULIAN. The conditions in certain regions through which you have to pass seem really to be extremely dangerous.

SALA. Exaggerations. We have better information than that. According to my opinion there is nothing back of those articles but the petty jealousy of English scientists. What you read had been translated from the *Daily News*. And it's fully three weeks since it appeared there. — Have you seen Felix, by the way?

JULIAN. He was at my house only last night. And this morning I called on the Wegrats. He wanted to have a look at that picture of his mother which I painted twenty-three years ago. — And one thing and another led to my telling him everything.

SALA. Oh, you did? [*Thoughtfully*] And how did he take it?

JULIAN. It stirred him rather more than I had thought possible.

SALA. Well, I hope you didn't expect him to fall into your arms as the recovered son does in the play.

JULIAN. No, of course not. — I told him everything, without any attempt at sparing myself. And for that reason he seemed to feel the wrong done to his mother's husband more strongly than anything else. But that won't last very long. He'll soon understand that, in the higher sense, no wrong has been done at all. People of Wegrat's type are not made to hold actual possession of anything — whether it be wives or children

They mean a refuge, a dwelling place — but never a real home. Can you understand what I mean by that? It is their mission to take into their arms creatures who have been worn out or broken to pieces by some kind of passion. But they never guess whence such creatures come. And while it is granted them to attract and befriend, they never understand whither those creatures go. They exist for the purpose of sacrificing themselves unconsciously, and in such sacrifices they find a happiness that might seem a pretty poor one to others. . . . You are not saying a word?

SALA. I am listening.

JULIAN. And have no reply to make?

SALA. Oh, well — it is possible to grind out scales quite smoothly even when the fiddle has got a crack. . . .

[*It is growing darker.* FELIX *appears on the terrace*]

SALA. Who is that?

FELIX [*on the terrace*]. It's me. The servant told me . . .

SALA. Oh, Felix! Glad you came.

FELIX [*coming down into the garden*]. Good evening, Mr. von Sala. — Good evening, Mr. Fichtner.

JULIAN. Good evening, Felix.

SALA. I am delighted to see you.

FELIX. What magnificent old trees!

SALA. Yes, a piece of real woods — all you have to do is to forget the fence. — What brought you anyhow? I didn't expect you until to-morrow morning. Have you really made up your mind already?

JULIAN. Am I in the way?

FELIX. Oh, no. There is nothing secret about it. — I accept your offer, Mr. von Sala, and ask if you would be kind enough to speak to Count Ronsky.

SALA [*shaking* FELIX *by the hand*]. I am glad of it. . . . [*To* JULIAN] It has to do with our Asiatic venture.

JULIAN. What? — You intend to join the expedition?

FELIX. Yes.

SALA. Have you already talked it over with your father?

FELIX. I shall do so to-night. — But that's a mere formality. I am determined, provided no other obstacles appear . . .

SALA. I shall speak to the Count this very day.

FELIX. I don't know how to thank you.

SALA. There is no reason at all. In fact, I don't have to say another word. The Count knows everything he needs to know about you.

VALET [*appearing on the terrace*]. There is a lady asking if you are at home, sir.

SALA. Didn't she give her name? — You'll have to excuse me a moment, gentlemen. [*He goes toward the* VALET, *and both disappear into the house*]

JULIAN. You are going away?

FELIX. Yes. And I am very happy this occasion has offered itself.

JULIAN. Have you also informed yourself concerning the real nature of this undertaking?

FELIX. It means at any rate genuine activity and the opening of wider worlds.

JULIAN. And couldn't those things be found in connection with more hopeful prospects?

FELIX. That's possible. But I don't care to wait.

[SALA *and* IRENE *enter*]

IRENE [*still on the terrace, talking to* SALA]. I couldn't leave Vienna without keeping my promise.

SALA. And I thank you for it, Miss Herms.

IRENE [*descending into the garden with* SALA]. You have a wonderful place here. — How do you do, Julian? Good evening, Lieutenant.

SALA. You should have come earlier, Miss Herms, so that you could have seen it in full sunlight.

IRENE. Why, I was here two hours ago. But it was like an enchanted castle. It was impossible to get in. The bell didn't ring at all.

SALA. Oh, of course! I hope you pardon. If I had had the slightest idea . . .

IRENE. Well, it doesn't matter. I have made good use of my time. I went on through the woods as far as Neustift and Salmansdorf.[1] And then I got out and followed a road that I remembered since many years ago. [*She looks at* JULIAN] I rested on a bench where I sat once many, many years ago, with a close friend. [*Smilingly*]. Can you guess, Mr. Fichtner? The outlook is wonderful. Beyond the fields you have a perfect view of the whole city as far as the Danube.

SALA [*pointing to the stone seat*].

[1] Former villages, now suburbs of Vienna, lying still nearer the city limits than Dornbach, where Sala is living.

Won't you sit down here for a while, Miss Herms?

IRENE. Thanks. [*She raises her lorgnette to study the busts of the two emperors*] It makes one feel quite Roman. . . . But I hope, gentlemen, I haven't interrupted any conference.

SALA. Not at all.

IRENE. I have that feeling, however. All of you look so serious. — I think I'll rather leave.

SALA. Oh, you mustn't, Miss Herms. — Is there anything more you want to ask me about that affair of ours, Felix?

FELIX. If Miss Herms would pardon me for a minute . . .

IRENE. Oh, certainly — please!

SALA. You'll excuse me, Miss Herms . . .

FELIX. It is a question of what I should do in regard to my present commission. — [*He is still speaking as he goes out with* SALA]

IRENE. What kind of secrets have those two together? What's going on here anyhow?

JULIAN. Nothing that can be called a secret. That young fellow is also going to join the expedition, I hear. And so they have a lot of things to talk over, of course.

IRENE [*who has been following* FELIX *and* SALA *with her eyes*] Julian — it's he.

[JULIAN *remains silent*]

IRENE. You don't need to answer me. The matter has been in my mind all the time. . . . The only thing I can't understand is why I haven't discovered it before. It is he. — And he is twenty-three. — And I who actually thought when you drove me away: if only he doesn't kill himself! . . . And there goes his son.

JULIAN. What does that help me? He doesn't belong to me.

IRENE. But look at him! He is there — he's alive, and young, and handsome. Isn't that enough? [*She rises*] And I who was ruined by it!

JULIAN. How?

IRENE. Do you understand? Ruined . . .

JULIAN. I have never suspected it.

IRENE. Well, you couldn't have helped me anyhow. [*Pause*] Good-by. Make an excuse for me, please. Tell them anything you want. I am going away, and I don't want to know anything more.

JULIAN. What's the matter with you? Nothing has changed.

IRENE. You think so? — To me it is as if all these twenty-three years had suddenly undergone a complete change. — Good-by.

JULIAN. Good-by — for a while.

IRENE. For a while? Do you care? — Really? — Do you feel sad, Julian? — Now I am sorry for you again. [*Shaking her head*] Of course, that's the way you are. So what is there to do about it?

JULIAN. Please control yourself. Here they are coming.

SALA [*returns with* FELIX]. Now we're all done.

FELIX. Thank you very much. I shall have to leave now.

IRENE. And to-morrow you are already going away again?

FELIX. Yes, Miss Herms.

IRENE. You're also going toward the city now, Lieutenant, are you not? If you don't object, I'll take you along.

FELIX. That's awfully kind of you.

SALA. What, Miss Herms . . .? This is a short visit indeed.

IRENE. Yes, I have still a few errands to do. For to-morrow I must return to the wilderness. And probably it will be some time before I get to Vienna again. — Well, Lieutenant?

FELIX. Good-by, Mr. Fichtner. And if I shouldn't happen to see you again . . .

JULIAN. Oh, we'll meet again.

IRENE. Now the people will say: look at the lieutenant with his mamma in tow. [*She gives a last glance to* JULIAN]

[SALA *accompanies* IRENE *and* FELIX *up the steps to the terrace*]

JULIAN [*remains behind, walking back and forth; after a while he is joined by* SALA]. Have you no doubt that your appeal to Count Ronsky will be effective?

SALA. I have already received definite assurances from him, or I should never have aroused any hopes in Felix.

JULIAN. What caused you to do this, Sala?

SALA. My sympathy for Felix, I should say, and the fact that I like to travel in pleasant company.

JULIAN. And did it never occur to you, that the thought of losing him might be very painful to me?

SALA. What's the use of that, Julian? It is only possible to lose what you possess. And you cannot possess a thing to which you have not acquired any right. You know that as well as I do.

JULIAN. Does not, in the last instance, the fact that you need somebody give you a certain claim on him? — Can't you understand, Sala, that he represents my last hope? . . . That actually I haven't got anything or anybody left but him? . . . That wherever I turn, I find nothing but emptiness? . . . That I am horrified by the loneliness awaiting me?

SALA. And what could it help you if he stayed? And even if he felt something like filial tenderness toward you, how could that help you? . . . How can he or anybody else help you? . . . You say that loneliness horrifies you? . . . And if you had a wife by your side to-day, wouldn't you be lonely just the same? . . . Wouldn't you be lonely even if you were surrounded by children and grandchildren? . . . Suppose you had kept your money, your fame and your genius — don't you think you would be lonely for all that? . . . Suppose we were always attended by a train of bacchantes — nevertheless we should have to tread the downward path alone — we, who have never belonged to anybody ourselves. The process of aging must needs be a lonely one for our kind, and he is nothing but a fool who doesn't in time prepare himself against having to rely on any human being.

JULIAN. And do you imagine, Sala, that you need no human being?

SALA. In the manner I have used them they will always be at my disposal. I have always been in favor of keeping at a certain distance. It is not my fault that other people haven't realized it.

JULIAN. In that respect you are right, Sala. For you have never really loved anybody in this world.

SALA. Perhaps not. And how about you? No more than I, Julian. . . . To love means to live for the sake of somebody else. I don't say that it is a more desirable form of existence, but I do think, at any rate, that you and I have been pretty far removed from it. What has that which one like us brings into the world got to do with love? Though it include all sorts of funny, hypocritical, tender, unworthy, passionate things that pose as love — it isn't love for all that. . . . Have we ever made a sacrifice by which our sensuality or our vanity didn't profit? . . . Have we ever hesitated to betray or blackguard decent people, if by doing so we could gain an hour of happiness or of mere lust? . . . Have we ever risked our peace or our lives — not out of whim or recklessness — but to promote the welfare of someone who had given all to us? . . . Have we ever denied ourselves an enjoyment unless from such denial we could at least derive some comfort? . . . And do you think that we could dare to turn to any human being, man or woman, with a demand that any gift of ours be returned? I am not thinking of pearls now, or annuities, or cheap wisdom, but of some piece of our real selves, some hour of our own existence, which we have surrendered to such a being without at once exacting payment for it in some sort of coin. My dear Julian, we have kept our doors open, and have allowed our treasures to be viewed — but prodigal with them we have never been. You no more than I. We may just as well join hands, Julian. I am a little less prone to complain than you are — that's the whole difference. . . . But I am not telling you anything new. All this you know as well as I do. It is simply impossible for us not to know ourselves. Of course, we try at times conscientiously to deceive ourselves, but it never works. Our follies and rascalities may remain hidden to others — but never to ourselves. In our innermost souls we always know what to think of ourselves. — It's getting cold, Julian. Let's go indoors. [*They begin to ascend the steps to the terrace*]

JULIAN. All that may be true, Sala. But this much you have to grant me. If there be anybody in the world who has no right to make us pay for the mistakes of our lives, it is a person who has us to thank for his own life.

SALA. There is no question of payment in this. Your son has a mind for essentials, Julian. You have said so yourself. And he feels that to have done nothing for a man but to put him into the world, is to have done very little indeed.

JULIAN. Then, at least, everything must become as it was before he knew anything at all. Once more I shall become to him a human being like anybody else. Then he will not dare to leave me. . . . I cannot bear it. How have I deserved that he should run away from me? . . . And even if all that I have held for good and true within myself — even if, in the end, my very fondness for this young man, who

is my son — should prove nothing but self-delusion — yet I love him now. . . . Do you understand me, Sala? I love him, and all I ask is that he may believe it before I must lose him forever. . . .

[*It grows dark. The two men pass across the terrace and enter the drawing-room. The stage stands empty a little while. In the meantime the wind has risen somewhat.* JOHANNA *enters by the avenue of trees from the right and goes past the pool toward the terrace. The windows of the drawing-room are illumined.* SALA *has seated himself at a table. The valet enters the room and serves him a glass of wine.* JOHANNA *stops. She is apparently much excited. Then she ascends two of the steps to the terrace.* SALA *seems to hear a noise and turns his head slightly. When she sees this,* JOHANNA *hurries down again and stops beside the pool. There she stands looking down into the water*]

ACT V

The garden at the WEGRATS'. REUMANN *sits at a small table and writes something in his notebook.*

JULIAN [*enters quickly by way of the veranda*]. Is it true, Doctor?

REUMANN [*rising*]. Yes, it's true.

JULIAN. She has disappeared?

REUMANN. Yes, she has disappeared. She has been gone since yesterday afternoon. She has left no word behind, and she has taken nothing at all with her — she has simply gone away and never returned.

JULIAN. But what can have happened to her?

REUMANN. We have not been able to guess even. Perhaps she has lost her way and will come back. Or she has suddenly made up her mind — if we only knew to what!

JULIAN. Where are the others?

REUMANN. We agreed to meet here again at ten. I visited the various hospitals and other places where it might be possible to find some trace. . . . I suppose the professor has made a report to the police by this time.

FELIX [*enters quickly*]. Nothing new?

REUMANN. Nothing.

[JULIAN *shakes hands with* FELIX]

REUMANN. From where do you come?

FELIX. I went to see Mr. von Sala.

REUMANN. Why?

FELIX. I thought it rather possible that he might have a suspicion, or be able to give us some kind of direction. But he knows nothing at all. That was perfectly clear. And if he had known anything — had known anything definite — he would have told me. I am sure of that. He was still in bed when I called on him. I suppose he thought I had come about my own matter. When he heard that Johanna had disappeared, he turned very pale. . . . But he doesn't know anything.

WEGRAT [*enters*]. Anything? [*All the others shake their heads.* JULIAN *presses his hand.* WEGRAT *sitting down*] They asked me to give more details, something more tangible to go by. But what is there to give? . . . I have nothing . . . The whole thing is a riddle to me. [*Turning to* JULIAN] In the afternoon she went out for a short walk as usual. . . . [*To* FELIX] Was there anything about her that attracted attention? . . . It seems quite impossible to me that she could have had anything in mind when she left the house — that she could know already — that she was going away forever.

FELIX. Perhaps though . . .

WEGRAT. Of course, she was very reserved — especially of late, since the death of her mother. . . . I wonder if it could be that? . . . Would you think that possible, Doctor?

[REUMANN *shrugs his shoulders*]

FELIX. Did any one of us really know her? And who takes a real interest in another person anyhow?

REUMANN. It is apparently fortunate that such is the case. Otherwise we should all go mad from pity or loathing or anxiety. [*Pause*] Now I must get around to my patients. There are a few calls that cannot be postponed. I shall be back by dinner-time. Good-by for a while. [*He goes out*]

WEGRAT. To think that you can watch a young creature like her grow up — can see the child turn into girl, and then into a young lady — can speak hundreds of thousands of words to her. . . . And one day she rises from the table, puts on hat and coat, and goes . . . and you have no idea as to whether

she has slipped away — if into nothingness or into a new life.

FELIX. But whatever may have happened, father — she wanted to get away from us. And in that fact, I think, we should find a certain consolation.

WEGRAT [*shakes his head in perplexity*]. Everything is fluttering away — willingly or unwillingly — but away it goes.

FELIX. Father, we can't tell what may have happened. It's conceivable, at least, that Johanna may have formed some decision which she does not carry out. Perhaps she will come back in a few hours, or days.

WEGRAT. You believe . . . you think it possible, do you?

FELIX. Possible — yes. But if she shouldn't come — of course, father, I shall give up the plan of which I told you yesterday. Under circumstances like these I couldn't think of going so far away from you for such a long time.

WEGRAT [*to* JULIAN]. And now he's going to sacrifice himself for my sake!

FELIX. Perhaps I could arrange to have myself transferred here.

WEGRAT. No, Felix, you know very well that I couldn't accept such a thing.

FELIX. But it's no sacrifice. I assure you, father, that I stay with you only because I *can't* go away from you now.

WEGRAT. Oh, yes, Felix, you can — you will be able. And you are not to stay here for my sake — you mustn't. I could never be sure that it would prove of any help to me to have you give up a plan which you have taken hold of with such enthusiasm. I think it would be inexcusable of you to draw back, and wicked of me to permit it. You must be happy at having found a way at last, by which you may reach all you have longed for. It makes me happy, too, Felix. If you missed this opportunity, you would regret it all your life.

FELIX. But so much may have changed since yesterday — such a tremendous lot — for you and for me.

WEGRAT. For me, perhaps. . . . But never mind. I won't stand it — I will not accept such a sacrifice. Of course, I might accept it, if I could find it of any special advantage to myself. But I shouldn't have you any more than if you were gone away . . . less . . . not at all. This fate that has descended on us must not add to its inherent power what is still worse — that it makes us do in our confusion what is against our own natures. Sometime we always get over every disaster, no matter how frightful it be. But whatever we do in violation of our innermost selves can never be undone. [*Turning to* JULIAN] Isn't that true, Julian?

JULIAN. You are absolutely right.

FELIX. Thanks, father. I feel grateful that you make it so easy for me to agree with you.

WEGRAT. That's good, Felix. . . . During the weeks you will remain in Europe we shall be able to talk over a lot of things — more perhaps than in the years gone by. Indeed, how little people know about each other! . . . But I am getting tired. We stayed awake all night.

FELIX. Won't you rest a while, father?

WEGRAT. Rest . . . You'll stay at home, Felix, won't you?

FELIX. Yes, I shall wait right here. What else is there to do?

WEGRAT. I'm racking my brain until it's near bursting . . . Why didn't she say anything to me? Why have I known so little about her? Why have I kept so far away from her? [*He goes out*]

FELIX. How that man has been belied — all his life long — by all of us.

JULIAN. There is in this world no sin, no crime, no deception, that cannot be atoned. Only for what has happened here, there should be no expiation and no forgetfulness, you think?

FELIX. Can it be possible that you don't understand? . . . Here a lie has been eternalized. There is no getting away from it. And she who did it was my mother — and it was you who made her do it — and the lie am I, and such I must remain as long as I am passing for that which I am not.

JULIAN. Let us proclaim the truth then, Felix. — I shall face any judge that you may choose, and submit to any verdict passed on me. — Must I alone remain condemned forever? Should I alone, among all that have erred, never dare to say: "It is atoned"?

FELIX. It is too late. Guilt can be wiped out by confession only while the guilty one is still able to make restitution. You ought to know yourself, that this respite expired long ago.

[SALA *enters*]

FELIX. Mr. von Sala! — Have you anything to tell us?

SALA. Yes. — Good morning, Julian. — No, stay, Julian. I am glad to have a witness. [*To* FELIX] Are you determined to join the expedition?

FELIX. I am.

SALA. So am I. But it is possible that one of us must change his mind.

FELIX. Mr. von Sala . . . ?

SALA. It would be a bad thing to risk finding out that you have started on a journey of such scope with one whom you would prefer to shoot dead if you knew him completely.

FELIX. Where is my sister, Mr. von Sala?

SALA. I don't know. Where she is at this moment, I don't know. But last evening, just before you arrived, she had left me for the last time.

FELIX. Mr. von Sala . . .

SALA. Her farewell words to me were: Until to-morrow. You can see that I had every reason to be surprised this morning, when you appeared at my house. Permit me furthermore to tell you, that yesterday, of all days, I asked Johanna to become my wife — which seemed to agitate her very much. In telling you this, I have by no means the intention of smoothing over things. For my question implied no desire on my part to make good any wrong I might have done. It was apparently nothing but a whim — like so much else. There is here no question of anything but to let you know the truth. This means that I am at your disposal in any manner you may choose. — I thought it absolutely necessary to say all this before we were brought to the point of having to descend into the depths of the earth together, or, perhaps, to sleep in the same tent.

FELIX [*after a long pause*]. Mr. von Sala . . . we shall not have to sleep in the same tent.

SALA. Why not?

FELIX. Your journey will not last that long.

[*A very long pause ensues*]

SALA. Oh . . . I understand. And are you sure of that?

FELIX. Perfectly. [*Pause*]

SALA. And did Johanna know it?

FELIX. Yes.

SALA. I thank you. — Oh, you can safely take my hand. The matter has been settled in the most chivalrous manner possible. — Well? . . . It is not customary to refuse one's hand to him who is already down.

FELIX [*gives his hand to* SALA; *then he says*]. And where can she be?

SALA. I don't know.

FELIX. Didn't she give you any hint at all?

SALA. None whatever.

FELIX. But have you no conjecture? Has she perhaps established any connections — abroad? Had she any friends at all, of which I don't know?

SALA. Not to my knowledge.

FELIX. Do you think that she is still alive?

SALA. I can't tell.

FELIX. Are you not *willing* to say anything more, Mr. von Sala?

SALA. I am not *able* to say anything more. I have nothing left to say. Farewell, and good luck on your trip. Give my regards to Count Ronsky.

FELIX. But we are not seeing each other for the last time?

SALA. Who can tell?

FELIX [*holding out his hand to* SALA]. I must hurry to my father. I think it my duty to let him know what I have just learned from you. [SALA *nods*] [*To* JULIAN] Good-by. [*He goes out*]

[JULIAN *and* SALA *start to leave together*]

JULIAN [*as* SALA *suddenly stops*]. Why do you tarry? Let's get away.

SALA. It is a strange thing to *know*. A veil seems to spread in front of everything. . . . "Away with you!" — But I don't care to submit to it as long as I am still here — if it be only for another hour . . .

JULIAN. Do you believe it then?

SALA [*looking long at* JULIAN]. Do I believe it . . . ? He behaved rather nicely, that son of yours. . . . "We shall not have to sleep in the same tent." . . . Not bad! I might have said it myself. . . .

JULIAN. But why don't you come? Have you perhaps something more to tell after all?

SALA. That's the question I must put to you, Julian.

JULIAN. Sala?

SALA. Because I didn't say anything about a peculiar hallucination I experienced just before coming here. I imagine it was . . .

JULIAN. Please, speak out!

SALA. What do you think of it? Before I left my house — just after Felix had gone — I went down into my

garden — that is to say, I ran through it — in a remarkable state of excitement, as you may understand. And as I passed by the pool, it was exactly as if I had seen on the bottom of it . . .

JULIAN. Sala!

SALA. There is a blue-greenish glitter on the water, and besides, the shadow of the beech tree falls right across it early in the morning. And by a strange coincidence Johanna said yesterday: "The water can no more hold my image . . ." That was, in a way, like challenging fate. . . . And as I passed by the pool, it was as if . . . the water had retained her image just the same.

JULIAN. Is that true?

SALA. True . . . or untrue . . . what is that to me? It could be of interest to me only if I were to remain in this world another year — or another hour at least.

JULIAN. You mean to . . . ?

SALA. Of course, I do. Would you expect me to wait for it? That would be rather painful, I think. [*To* JULIAN, *with a smile*] From whom are you now going to get your cues, my dear friend? Yes, it's all over now. . . . And what has become of it? . . . Where are the *thermæ* of Caracalla? Where is the park at Lugano? . . . Where is my nice little house? . . . No nearer to me, and no farther away, than those marble steps leading down to mysterious depths. . . . Veils in front of everything. . . . Perhaps your son will discover if the three-hundred and twelfth be the last one — and if not, it won't give him much concern anyhow. . . . Don't you think he has been acting rather nicely? . . . I have somehow the impression that a better generation is growing up — with more poise and less brilliancy. — Send your regards to heaven, Julian.

[JULIAN *makes a movement to accompany him*]

[*Gently but firmly*] You stay here, Julian. This is the end of our dialogue. Farewell. [*He goes out quickly*]

FELIX [*entering rapidly*]. Is Mr. von Sala gone? My father wanted to talk to him. — And you are still here? . . . Why did Mr. von Sala go? What did he tell you? — Johanna . . . ! Johanna . . .?

JULIAN. She is dead . . . she has drowned herself in the pool.

FELIX [*with a cry of dismay*]. Where did he go?

JULIAN. I don't think you can find him.

FELIX. What is he doing?

JULIAN. He is paying . . . while it's time . . .

[WEGRAT *enters from the veranda*]

FELIX [*runs to meet him*]. Father . . .

WEGRAT. Felix! What has happened?

FELIX. We must go to Sala's house, father.

WEGRAT. Dead . . . ?

FELIX. Father! [*He takes hold of* WEGRAT'S *hand and kisses it*] My father!

[JULIAN *has left the room slowly in the meantime*]

WEGRAT. Must things of this kind happen to make that word sound as if I had heard it for the first time . . . ?

THE END

THE FIRES OF ST. JOHN

(*1900*)

By Hermann Sudermann

THE SUNKEN BELL

(*1896*)

By Gerhart Hauptmann

HAUPTMANN AND SUDERMANN: "THE SUNKEN BELL" AND "THE FIRES OF ST. JOHN"

By far the greater of the two is Hauptmann. It is he who was the innovator, Sudermann the follower, although the latter, born in 1857, was the elder by five years. It is Hauptmann who is revered in Germany, Sudermann being critically assigned to the realm of mechanical playwright interested in the obviously theatrical. Not that Sudermann was lacking in what was strikingly effective: "Heimat" still holds the stage, as Dumas' "Camille" holds; "Es Lebe das Leben" bears the same relation to the modern movement that Pinero's "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" and "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith." There being in Sudermann the obviously theatrical, one does not find in him the intense note of sincerity felt in Hauptmann; always the conscious posing of the successful playwright and novelist is in his work. But there is no doubt that, despite the derogatory position assigned to Sudermann by the discerning critics, his position in Germany, nevertheless, is not to be ignored. His novels were widely read, his plays monetary successes. Since writing the biographical sketch of Sudermann for my "Representative One-Act Plays by Continental Authors", the dramatist has published his "Das Bilderbuch Meiner Jugend", in English, "The Book of My Youth" (Harper and Brothers, 1923) — a sentimental narrative, which has much of the German fictionist about it, but little that is stimulating, that shows a penetrating understanding of a condition out of which he came. This first volume of his autobiography leaves him at the threshold of his literary career, but I believe, even though the significant years are to follow, that his manner of treatment stamps the book as minor, the rambling of a man on the other side of sixty, with his work done. There are, of course, in "The Book of My Youth", as there are in Sudermann's early plays, reflections of time and circumstance which are of value to the student. Yet, though Hauptmann went further than Sudermann, and was the greater artist, the greater thinker, they both sponsored the Young Germany, as Pinero and Jones sponsored or made ready the way for the Young England. In 1889, they launched their first dramatic work, Sudermann with "Honor", Hauptmann with "Before the Dawn", and it must be recalled that this was the year of the establishment of the Freie Buehne. One has to study Augier and Dumas, *fils*, to understand Sudermann, as one has to know of Tom Robertson to trace the beginnings of Pinero and Jones.

Strictures of copyright prevented me from using Mrs. Wharton's translation of Sudermann's "The Joy of Living", produced in America by Mrs. Patrick Campbell. I have, therefore, selected Mr. Swickard's version of "The Fires of St. John" (1900), a mixture of the good and bad in Sudermann, and thoroughly representative of his method. It was produced by Miss Nance O'Neil, in Boston, on January 21, 1904.

Hauptmann and Sudermann are mileposts in a development that has passed into something more modern, leaving them in the perspective past. To read Goldberg's section on Germany in his "The Drama of Transition", one would think that the

theories of Expressionism had wiped out entirely any memory of the Naturalism of the late nineteenth century. Sudermann and Hauptmann have now the pre-eminence of a certain kind of antiquity, especially when contrasted with such a playwright as Ernst Toller, whose "Masse-Mensch" is a much-talked-of Reinhardt production. The English reader can the better sense the chasm between the Hauptmann-Sudermann period and the present by contrasting Galsworthy's "The Silver Box" and "The Pigeon" with Eugene O'Neill's "The Hairy Ape", "Emperor Jones" and "Anna Christie."

The significance of Hauptmann's importance nevertheless remains to be reckoned with in modern drama, and is measured by the fact that English readers have an almost complete edition of his dramatic works, edited by Professor Ludwig Lewisohn, whereas there are only stray translations of Sudermann. There is more sensitiveness to Hauptmann, seen in the way he passed from actuality to ideality, from a certain positivism to a mystical philosophy, clearly noted in the contrast of "The Weavers" with "The Sunken Bell." One critic claims that Hauptmann is not argumentative. He says, "This freedom from the heat of any immediate purpose has enabled Hauptmann to attain a higher degree of plasticity in the final aim of every creative artist — the shaping of character." You find another, in a college thesis, parallelling the methods of Hauptmann and Galsworthy, showing in their work the influence of heredity and environment, their interest in family studies, their understanding of mob psychology. This student went so far as to suggest a comparative table of similar subjects treated by both, as, for instance, Capital and Labor in "Strife" and "Die Weber"; Justice in "The Silver Box", "Justice" and "Der Rote Hahn"; the fallen girl in "The Eldest Son" and "Rose Bernd."

The autobiographical Hauptmann is evident in most of his plays: you see a picture of his Sicilian ancestry in "The Weavers", which outlines his grandfather's life; the portrait of his father is in "Drayman Henschel"; the pietistic influence of his mother is responsible for "Hannele" and "The Fool in Christ." Step by step, Mr. Lewisohn suggests how to reach the man, Hauptmann, through his plays, and shows how, early in his career, his sympathy was pledged to the suffering which resulted from modern conditions. Such an attitude was not wholly individual with him; it was part of the time-spirit which was bringing about a revolution in drama, where intrigue and connivance were giving way to close scrutiny of life, thus demanding a new technique. In fact, claims Lewisohn, asserting that Germany formulated this new technique, "men as different as John Galsworthy . . . and the older Henri Lavedan . . . are what they are largely through the absorption . . . of the dramaturgic methods which are, but for the prophetic work of Ibsen, primarily, if not exclusively, Hauptmann's own."

In some moods, one compares Hauptmann with Gorky, — for instance, the canvas of "The Weavers" with "The Lower Depths"; in other moods, one rejoices with the enemies of realism who recognized in the high poetry of "The Sunken Bell" a symbolism which was the antithesis of what one might expect from his earlier training. You find in Hauptmann, therefore, the dual artist, one on the side of the Goncourts in his interest in psychiatry; the other on the side of Maeterlinck in his mysticism.

Hauptmann was born November 15, 1862, and was educated at the Breslau Realschule, the Royal College of Art, and the University of Jena. In 1905, he was given an LL.D. by Oxford University, and in 1912 received the Nobel Prize.

In 1922 the town of Breslau gave a dramatic festival in honor of his sixtieth birthday, and all Germany celebrated.

There are many diversified angles from which to view Hauptmann — his social irony and his spiritualized poetry offering equal attraction. One attaches his name to the Freie Buehne in Berlin, to the Théâtre Libre in Paris; one finds him under the influence of Haeckel and of the Hart brothers; one finds him upholding the artistic traceries of Maeterlinck's intangible drama. All that is written of him now will have to be enlarged or modified if ever his correspondence is published; for therein a more complete confession of himself will be found. Yet his plays contain a sufficient confession to measure his past.

Sudermann is not so assured for the future as Hauptmann. I say this, even though the German drama has passed beyond him. Nevertheless, when one reads "The Weavers" and "Lonely Lives", and passes to Gorky's "The Lower Depths" and Tolstoy's "The Power of Darkness", one realizes that all alike go deep into human life, and illuminate even the darkest passages: and where drama goes deep into human life there is assured a permanence that no changing theories of the theatre can destroy. Ibsen's "Peer Gynt" and "Brand" have these qualities; so have Hauptmann's "Hannele" and "The Sunken Bell."

THE FIRES OF ST. JOHN

A DRAMA, IN FOUR ACTS

By HERMANN SUDERMANN

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED BY
CHARLES SWICKARD

This translation and adaptation of "JOHANNISFEUER" was made by special permission from Herr SUDERMANN, and is the only authorized English version.

THE FIRES OF ST. JOHN was first presented in English, in Boston, Massachusetts, on January twenty-first, 1904, with the following cast:

MR. BRAUER	*Mr. George C. Staley*
MRS. BRAUER	*Mrs. Charles W. Brooks*
GERTRUDE	*Miss Blanche Stoddard*
GEORGE VON HARTEN	*Mr. E. J. Ratcliffe*
AN OLD GYPSY WOMAN	*Miss Ricca Allen*
HAFFNER	*Mr. Norwell McGregor*
MR. PAUL	*Mr. Frederick Sullivan*
KATIE	*Miss Fannie Cannon*
MARIE	*Miss Nance O'Neil*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MR. BRAUER	*Proprietor of a large country estate*
MRS. BRAUER	*His wife*
GERTRUDE	*Their daughter*
GEORGE VON HARTEN	*Their nephew*
AN OLD GYPSY WOMAN	
HAFFNER	*Assistant Pastor*
MR. PAUL	*Overseer*
KATIE	*Housekeeper*
SERVANT GIRL	
MARIE	*A foundling*

TIME OF ACTION, ABOUT 1880.

PLACE OF ACTION, POMERANIA (PRUSSIA).

This play is fully protected by the copyright law, all requirements of which have been fully complied with. In its present form it is dedicated to the reading public only, and no performance may be given without the permission of the publishers, owners of the acting rights.

Copyright, 1903, by Charles Swickard.
Copyright, 1904, by John W. Luce and Company.
All rights reserved.

THE FIRES OF ST. JOHN

ACT I

Breakfast-room at the BRAUER *residence. The back wall is formed by three glass doors, separated by marble pillars. Behind this, the veranda is visible, and balustrade, hung with fine rug, and stairs, leading into the garden. The glass doors have practical, solid wooden shutters, with bars, fastening inside. Doors right and left. Large table centre, with breakfast laid. Front, to the left, sofa, table and easy-chair. To the right, sewing-machine, and basket filled with table-linen. Old-fashioned photos and engravings on walls. Otherwise, well-to-do family home.*

Time of day: Morning.

[GERTRUDE *busy at breakfast-table*]

BRAUER [*enters with* PAUL, *from right*]. Confound it! Everything seems to go wrong this morning!

[*Throws his cap on chair, angrily*]

GERTRUDE [*happily*]. Good morning, papa!

BRAUER. Morning, my child. Such carelessness! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. If this thing had happened earlier in the season, out on the meadows — but at this time of the year — !!! Oh! Confound it all, anyway!!!! It is inexcusable!!!

GERTRUDE. What is the matter, papa?

BRAUER. The black cow has been overfed. But of course, when Marie is not about to look after everything, things go to rack and ruin. Well, man, what excuse are you going to make?

PAUL. None, Mr. Brauer.

BRAUER. Now that's the most sensible thing you have said this morning. Here, take a cigar and get to work; but mind! send for the veterinary surgeon at once. Have you had breakfast?

PAUL. Yes, sir!

BRAUER. Then what the devil are you waiting for?

PAUL. I — I — I wanted to excuse myself, and ——

BRAUER [*impatiently*]. It's all right! it's all right!

PAUL [*remains — hesitatingly*]. G — Good morning!!

BRAUER. Well?

PAUL. I — I have something else to tell you ——

BRAUER. Then out with it.

PAUL [*with a glance at* GERTRUDE]. But ——

BRAUER. H'm! Gertrude, darling, will you please see if it is still threatening rain?

GERTRUDE. Yes, papa! [*Goes out on the veranda*]

BRAUER. Well?

PAUL [*confidentially*]. The old hag has turned up again.

BRAUER [*alarmed*]. Wha —— The devil you say! H'm! Who — who has seen her?

PAUL. She was seen begging in the village — and last night, one of my men observed her creeping stealthily around the sheds yonder.

BRAUER [*scratching his head*]. Yes, yes! I had almost forgotten. She has served her last sentence — fully five years! — we have been free from her annoying presence and now, she has returned. Well, what does she want?

PAUL. She has heard her daughter is about to be married, she says.

BRAUER [*laughs*]. *Her* daughter? ha, ha! I see! no doubt she has learned of Gertrude's betrothal. Well? and ——

PAUL. And so she has come to get her share of the wedding-cake — so she says; but she dare not venture here.

BRAUER. Well, I should advise her to keep a respectful distance. Take good care, Mr. Paul, that she approaches no one of this house. Do you hear? No one. I will see the constable myself; and perhaps we'll soon get rid of her again. Good morning.

PAUL. Good morning, Mr. Brauer. [*Exit*]

GERTRUDE [*enters*]. Shall I pour your coffee, papa?

BRAUER. What? My little one looking after the breakfast, eh? Can you do all that?

GERTRUDE. Oh, papa! if I couldn't do even that ——

BRAUER. But Marie?

GERTRUDE. Oh, of course — not as well as she — you must have patience with me, papa!

BRAUER. Why certainly, my pet! [*Embraces her*] And now, let me see — How many days are you left to me?

GERTRUDE. Only four more days, papa.

BRAUER. Now, you rascal! must you leave me? must you go and marry, eh? must you?

GERTRUDE. But papa, dear, it is all your own arrangement!

BRAUER. Of course, of course! what is a poor old man to do? Have you seen George this morning? [GERTRUDE *shakes her head*] Such sloth! He does nothing but sleep, sleep, sleep.

GERTRUDE. He worked until very late last night, papa. At dawn this morning I saw his light still burning; and then it was past three o'clock.

BRAUER. Yes, I must admit, he is diligent and industrious — but also stubborn — damned stubborn. [*The last is said almost to himself. Aloud*] Has mama been down?

GERTRUDE. No, not yet.

BRAUER. And Marie? has she returned?

GERTRUDE. She arrived by the early morning train.

BRAUER. And how nearly finished is the lover's nest, eh?

GERTRUDE. Only one more trip to the city, I believe she said.

BRAUER. Well, and do you like the arrangement?

GERTRUDE. I don't know, papa dear. I am kept entirely in the dark. It is to be a surprise to me. Oh, I will like it very much indeed, I think.

BRAUER. And are you happy, my pet?

GERTRUDE. Oh, papa, dear, I sometimes feel as if I didn't deserve all this happiness.

BRAUER. Well, my dear, a housewife who calls these soft-boiled eggs, certainly does not deserve such happiness.

GERTRUDE [*embarrassed*]. I only boiled them about three-quarters of an hour ——

BRAUER. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

GERTRUDE. Oh, I beg your pardon, papa, I will ——

BRAUER. There, there, I was only joking; never mind it. And Marie, I suppose, is taking her rest now?

GERTRUDE. If she only would do so. Papa, you must compel her to take a rest. No one can endure such a strain. One day she is looking after this house, and the next day she is in the city, furnishing our new home; and the nights she passes on the train. I am sure she will break down.

BRAUER. Well, well, I will look after that.

MRS. BRAUER [*enters from left*]. Good morning!

BRAUER. Morning! Well?

GERTRUDE [*throws her arms around her mother*]. Good morning, mama dear!

MRS. BRAUER [*caressing her*]. My sweet! my pet! only four more good mornings, and then ——

GERTRUDE. You must come to visit me soon, mama!

MRS. BRAUER [*crying*]. Visit? ah, yes!

BRAUER. No tears now, no tears, I beg of you! Tears on an empty stomach — b-r-r-r-r-r, that's poison.

MRS. BRAUER. My darling, who dressed your hair last night?

GERTRUDE. The housekeeper.

MRS. BRAUER. There! I knew Marie could not have done that. But do you know — Marie — a few moments ago I opened her door softly, to see how she was resting, and found her still fully dressed, just as she came from the train, seated at the open window, a book in her lap, and staring out into space.

BRAUER. Well, well, well! I thought her passion for novels had passed away long ago.

MRS. BRAUER. I've been thinking — we must watch her more closely.

BRAUER. She needs no one to watch over her! She is well able to take care of herself; but we must spare her ——

MRS. BRAUER. But, Henry, just now — three days before the wedding — who could think of sparing one's self?

BRAUER. Well, you know — h'm ——

MRS. BRAUER. Henry, you know how I love the girl; but, good gracious, she is not our own dear, sweet one ——

GERTRUDE. Oh, she is more than that, mama dear.

MRS. BRAUER. You are entirely too modest, my darling.

GERTRUDE. Well, just imagine, mama dear, she was going to be married — and I remained at home ——

MRS. BRAUER. Then we would retain our sunshine, our consolation, our —— [*Looking at breakfast-table with a questioning expression*] But, children, I can't understand ——

GERTRUDE. What, mama dear?

MRS. BRAUER. Gracious! Everything is so — so —— [*Topsy-turvy indicated by action*] If she is not going to sleep, she may as well come down here ——

GERTRUDE [*laughingly caressing her mama*]. There, you see, mama dear, not even a single meal can you eat without her.

[GEORGE VON HARTEN *enters*]

BRAUER. Well, at last you have aroused yourself; you ——

GEORGE [*interrupts him, tapping his hand*]. There, softly, softly, dear uncle; don't begin scolding so early in the morning.

BRAUER. Don't you think it's pretty near time to call me father, my boy?

GEORGE. Not until after the wedding, dear uncle. Good morning, auntie. [*Kissing her hand*] Well, little one? [*Kissing her*]

GERTRUDE [*leans on him lovingly*]. My George. [*Laughs suddenly*] Oh, just look! he is simply covered with hay!

GEORGE. Then you may make yourself useful by brushing me off.

BRAUER. The hay-loft seems to be your favorite sleeping-place lately.

GEORGE. Sleep? Heavens! who could sleep in this weather? I roam about, Lord knows where, over meadows and fields. Such St. John days!!! It's enough to drive one mad. The days never seem to end. Late last night I was sitting in front of my window. Said I to myself: "No sleep for me tonight, until that cursed nightingale runs out of melody" — when suddenly a meadow-lark announces the break of day — and there, it's morning. To the left, the twilight: to the right, the dawn, peacefully together. From glow to glow a new day arises. Children, I tell you, it was beautiful. Give me a cup of coffee.

BRAUER. But, tell me! Are you going to remain here now?

GEORGE. Why, certainly, until after the wedding.

BRAUER. But the propriety of such a thing ——

GERTRUDE [*imploringly*]. Oh, papa dear ——

GEORGE. It's immaterial to me. Under no circumstances do I desire to offend your sense of propriety; but then I will stay down at the inn, as the nearest place.

BRAUER. And in the morning you will bring us the house full of fleas.

MRS. BRAUER. But, Henry ——

BRAUER. Well, it's so.

GEORGE. If you will allow me! The wedding was set for the twentieth; therefore I obtained my first furlough from the nineteenth — and I trust you realize that I can't change the dates to suit myself. I arrived on the twentieth — and the wedding, of course — it was postponed.

MRS. BRAUER. But, George dear, neither your home, nor anything else was ready.

GEORGE. And besides, where am I to go? My own home is broken up; Marie has had everything torn up. By the way, has she returned?

[GERTRUDE *nods*]

MRS. BRAUER. Why, what's the matter? Have you two had another quarrel?

GEORGE. No, certainly not; but I should not have allowed the girl to make a drudge of herself for my sake. I almost wish I had remained at home.

GERTRUDE. Why, she is not doing all this for your sake, but for mine.

GEORGE. Now there, don't be conceited.

MRS. BRAUER [*caressing her*]. I think she has cause to be conceited.

GEORGE. As my future wife, she certainly has cause to be that.

BRAUER. There, there, don't you overrate yourself.

GEORGE. I don't, dear uncle; I am too practical for that.

BRAUER. So, so, you are too practical, eh? then what the devil possessed you to leave this piece of paper on my desk? eh?

GEORGE. Uncle, I beg of you, don't let us begin quarreling so early in the day.

BRAUER [*angry still*]. Very well but what does it mean?

GEORGE. It is simply a statement of my affairs. I am a free and independent man, and that is to show you that I am not only willing but also able to properly support my wife.

BRAUER [*still worked up*]. But I tell you ——

MARIE [*enters right*]. Oh — pardon me, papa — good morning!

GERTRUDE [*throws arms around her*]. Marie!

MARIE [*kisses her*]. My darling!

[*She goes to* BRAUER *and kisses his hand*]

BRAUER. You are back all right, I see! Here, here! [*Puts hand under her chin*] Head thrown back, I say — why, what's the matter? anything gone wrong with you, eh?

MARIE [*uncertain*]. N — no!

BRAUER [*to his wife*]. Look at her — she is positively livid.

MRS. BRAUER. What is the matter, my child?

MARIE. Mama, dear, I sat up all night in the train and have had no sleep at all.

BRAUER. And how much longer will it take you ——?

MARIE. Only one more trip to town, — but pardon me, papa, the new assistant pastor is at the gate and ——

BRAUER. Who?

MARIE. The new assistant pastor.

[GERTRUDE *snickers*]

BRAUER [*to* GERTRUDE]. What are you laughing at?

GERTRUDE [*pulling at* MARIE'S *skirt and can hardly keep from bursting out laughing*]. I — I — oh, I am not laughing.

BRAUER [*to* MARIE]. But what does he want?

MARIE. He says he does not wish to disturb the ladies so early in the morning, and asks you to please come out ——

BRAUER. Nonsense! tell him to come in.

MARIE. Yes, papa.

GEORGE. Good morning, Marie.

MARIE. Good morning, George.

[*Exit*]

BRAUER. Gertrude, come here. Now remember, my dear, such conduct is not at all becoming to a full-grown young lady.

GERTRUDE. My dear, sweet papa, I am so ashamed of myself — I — I'll never do it again — never. But it's so funny — ha, ha, ha! he is gone on Marie ——

MRS. BRAUER. My dear, remember you are now a bride and it would be far more proper to say ——

GEORGE. Smitten with her?

MRS. BRAUER [*somewhat reproachfully*]. George!!!

BRAUER. Sh, sh — silence!

[*During following scene,* MARIE *noiselessly clears off the table*]

PASTOR [*enters*]. I should not have dared to annoy the ladies at this early hour, if ——

BRAUER [*laughingly*]. Eight o'clock is not so very early in the country, my dear Pastor; you will soon learn that here.

MRS. BRAUER. And how is the good old pastor?

PASTOR [*doubtfully shrugging his shoulders*]. Well ——!

MRS. BRAUER [*alarmed*]. He is not worse, I hope?

PASTOR. At the age of eighty, my dear lady, one cannot be said to be growing stronger.

BRAUER. Ah, I see, Pastor, you are somewhat of a philosopher. Will you take something?

PASTOR. You are very kind. A good glass of brandy is half the morning sun.

BRAUER. Now that is a manly word, Pastor.

PASTOR. Oh! thank you! Your health! [*Drinks*]

BRAUER. Will you take something, George?

GEORGE. No thank you, uncle, not now.

MRS. BRAUER. When did you arrive, Pastor?

PASTOR. Just three weeks ago.

MRS. BRAUER. And do you like our town?

PASTOR. Very much indeed, thank you. I find the whole world beautiful; but the surroundings here are exceptionally so. Yes, this place to me seems doubly attractive, for here every one seems smiling and happy —— Pardon me, Miss, you have dropped the napkin.

[MARIE *smilingly bows her acknowledgment.* GERTRUDE *exits, stifling a laugh*]

BRAUER. Pastor, you will pardon this rudeness, she is still a child.

PASTOR. Oh, certainly, certainly; for she is right. I have not yet been able to overcome my old tendency to play the gallant in the presence of ladies — and

in this frock — I know — I must look somewhat ridiculous.

BRAUER. Tell me, Pastor, how did you happen to obtain this position?

PASTOR. Well, you see, that, too, is partly connected with this coat. There were four of us, classmates — who, after graduating, were eagerly awaiting the call to save the sinful world — and among them, myself the only one who was, what you might say, in fairly good financial circumstances. We were now and then compelled, first one and then the other, to present ourselves at the board of directors — and as a consequence my coat suffered severely. Now it really never fitted any one of my comrades and at my suggestion we finally purchased a coat, that came nearer fitting each of us, striking a happy medium, as it were, to every one's satisfaction. Then, about four weeks ago, an ex-fellow-student — the curate of the cathedral — came to us, with this information: "Ye holy men, list ye to me. In yon Lithuanian mountains lives a minister of the gospel, who, on account of his extreme age and feebleness, is incapacitated from properly performing his duties. And as there are four of you, I propose that you draw straws and leave it to chance who shall be the favored one." At that the others unanimously declared: "No, he who has shared with us his clothing shall be the favored one" — and — well, here I am and, I fear, not half as pious as I look.

BRAUER. Ah, courage, Pastor, courage ——

PASTOR. Pray do not think that I am ashamed of my calling; believe me, like our Lord and Master, my heart aches for suffering humanity, and therefore it has ever been my desire to follow in His footsteps. Besides, it was my father's wish. You must know my father is a well-to-do farmer — there are no really large estates in the lowlands — but he has considerable — yes, I might say, a great deal of money — and owing to my early surroundings, I'm afraid I am much better suited for a farmer than a minister of the gospel. But I will not give up, and continue to struggle and rid myself of all my bad habits. Your health!

BRAUER. Do you know, Pastor, I am beginning to like you! Do you wish to remain here and take the old pastor's place?

PASTOR. I really would like ——

BRAUER. Very well, my vote you shall have!

PASTOR. You are very kind, indeed. With such a position I should be quite content, and to complete my happiness —— but, by-the-bye, the object of my visit was, really, the bridal-sermon. I am afraid our good old pastor will not be able now ——

MRS. BRAUER. Ah ——

BRAUER [*simultaneously*]. Will not be equal to the exertion, you mean; ah — I feared as much.

PASTOR. Therefore, if you will allow me — unless you desired some one else ——

BRAUER. Pastor, if we had not already heard you in the pulpit I would deny your request, point blank, as you are practically a stranger to us. But your ways and sentiments please me, and therefore — what say you, wife? [*She nods*] — And you, George?

GEORGE. Oh, I don't know; but unless I am very much mistaken, there is already a great deal of sympathy between us, eh, Pastor?

PASTOR. Now I must confess that is rather meaningless, at least so far as I am concerned; for *my* sympathy extends towards the whole world.

GEORGE. At any rate I am glad ——

PASTOR [*jestingly*]. Then will you kindly leave us for awhile? I desire to inquire into your past record.

GEORGE [*shakes his finger laughingly*]. With pleasure, if you promise not to be too severe on me. [*Exit*]

PASTOR. Now, then, with your kind permission, I will take a few notes ——

BRAUER. Certainly, Pastor!

PASTOR. This young gentleman, your nephew, is especially close to the family, is he not?

BRAUER. Correct!

PASTOR. Pardon me, but may I ask in what way?

BRAUER. I will tell you, Pastor. It was in the year '67, when we had, here in East Prussia, a terrible drought — a year of distress and — do you remember anything about it?

PASTOR. Very little, as I was then still quite young.

BRAUER. Ah, it was terrible! Potatoes and fodder rotted before ripening. Of wheat and rye hardly a trace. We farmers, I tell you —! Then it was, when my brother-in-law, the husband of my sainted sister, whose estates were in the neighboring township yonder,

realized one day his financial ruin and with all his aristocratic pride — you understand — he saw no other way — he resorted to the pistol — he committed suicide.

PASTOR. And the — your sister, still lives?

BRAUER. Thank God, no! but from that day ——

PASTOR. Pardon the interruption; but I have heard your daughter, Miss Marie, called "the calamity child" by some of the villagers. Has that any connection with this year of distress?

MRS. BRAUER. And you didn't know that, Pastor — how she came into our house? Well, during that same terrible winter, we were returning one night, my husband and myself, from the town, where we had at our own expense erected a soup-kitchen — when suddenly, at the corner of the woods yonder, where the road makes a sharp turn, our horses shied — and there, in the middle of the road, we saw lying a woman, with a child pressed closely to her bosom. She refused to stir and begged us to put her out of her misery. Of course, we took her into the sleigh at once — ah, she was in an awful condition ——

BRAUER. I tell you, Pastor, it was months before we could rid the blankets of vermin.

MRS. BRAUER. And the child, the poor little thing ——! But after being bathed and fed, and lying there, between the clean white covers, we both stood over its bed — the little thing, with its pinched face, laughed at us and stretched out its tiny hands — my husband said to me: "Wife, I believe this is our share of all this sorrow and misery that heaven has sent us."

BRAUER. For you must know, Pastor, that our own daughter, Gertrude, was then not yet born.

MRS. BRAUER. No, not until three years later. Well, we bought the child from that miserable, drunken woman, in proper, legal form — determined and glad to get rid of her, for she did smell so of gin, I could not endure it any longer.

BRAUER. That is what the worst drunkards in these parts prefer to brandy.

PASTOR. Unfortunately!!!

BRAUER. But to come back to my nephew ——

PASTOR. Pardon me, another question. What became of the mother?

BRAUER. Ah, that is a bad story — and just to-day ——

PASTOR. Yes ——

BRAUER. Oh — nothing, nothing. Anyway — that woman really did return, and as we did not want the child to see her, we gave her more money. Of course she remembered that and so finally she became a positive plague.

MRS. BRAUER. Oh, Henry, I have often thought since, perhaps a mother's heart prompted her ——

BRAUER. You think so, eh? Then perhaps a mother's heart also prompted her to steal at the same time! for every time she honored us with a visit, something or other disappeared, until I grew suspicious, had her watched; she was caught red-handed — and, of course, a long term in prison was the result.

PASTOR. And the girl — does she know or suspect anything at all?

MRS. BRAUER. We told her her mother was dead. But one day she really did see her.

PASTOR. How did that misfortune happen?

MRS. BRAUER. It was on her confirmation day, just as the girls left the church in a body, when we heard a cry. What had happened? Why, that woman had been lying in wait for the procession; when suddenly she appeared, seized her child, and kneeling before her in the road, passionately covered her hands and feet with kisses.

PASTOR [*shuddering*]. Horrible!!!!!!

MRS. BRAUER. I tore the child from her arms, of course, and carried her into the house. We had to make some kind of an explanation — a drunken vagabond, I told her! Did she believe it? — H'm? — Then she fell ill ——

PASTOR. And how is it now?

BRAUER [*humorously*]. Why, Pastor, you seem very much interested.

GEORGE [*enters*]. I presume I am pretty well done by this time.

BRAUER. We haven't even started with your case. The pastor is interested in something of far greater importance.

PASTOR [*with meaning and moved*]. You must not believe that, Mr. von Harten; but there are lives whose fates are surrounded by so much mystery —— [*With a glance at* MARIE, *who enters left with package of linen*]

GEORGE [*who follows his glance*]. Yes, yes, you are right.

PASTOR. If you will allow me, I will call again about the sermon.

MRS. BRAUER [*giving him her hand*]. Pastor, you know you are always welcome in this house.

BRAUER. Give my regards to our good old pastor. Towards evening we will see him, as usual.

PASTOR. Oh, I had almost forgotten! He desires me to ask you kindly, should you again favor him with egg-nog, to please add a little more sugar, for the last was a trifle tart.

MRS. BRAUER. Why, of course, the poor old soul.

PASTOR. Do not say that, Madame; for when the time has come when all our wishes and hopes and desires are concentrated upon a small quantity of sweets, our sufferings are near the end. And now, adieu. Miss Marie, adieu.

MARIE [*preoccupied*]. Adieu.

[PASTOR *exits, accompanied by* BRAUER]

[GERTRUDE *enters*]

MRS. BRAUER. Don't be afraid, dear, no one will scold you.

GERTRUDE. Oh mama, I'm so ashamed of myself. When he arrived he seemed so jolly — and now — I am sure he is offended.

GEORGE. He was not offended, dear, only a little grave.

MRS. BRAUER. At any rate, what do you think of him, Marie?

MARIE [*glancing up from her work, sorting linen*]. Of whom, mama dear?

MRS. BRAUER. Why, the new pastor.

MARIE. Oh mama, my mind is so occupied, I hadn't given him a thought.

GERTRUDE [*aside to* GEORGE]. Now you tell her, George.

MARIE. Gertrude, how about our manzanillo-tree — any blossoms this morning?

MRS. BRAUER. You don't mean to say you haven't looked after that beloved tree of yours this morning?

MARIE. I have had no time, mama dear.

GERTRUDE [*to* GEORGE]. Now tell her.

GEORGE. Marie, both Gertrude and myself insist that you cease this endless drudgery for our sakes; it isn't right.

[MARIE, *humming, pays no heed — looks into space*]

GERTRUDE. See, she is not even listening.

MRS. BRAUER. What's that you are singing?

MARIE. I ——? Was I singing?

MRS. BRAUER. Well then, humming.

MARIE. Oh yes, last night at the station I heard a strange song — some one in a fourth-class coach was singing. Listen. [*Sings*]

"Zwirio czenay, zwirio tenay — kam'-mano bernyczo —
Rid wid wil dai dai — Ne'r mano bernyczo."

GEORGE. And the Lithuanian text — you memorized it just from hearing it?

MARIE. Certainly.

GEORGE. Well, where did you learn all that?

MARIE. Why, I have always known it.

GEORGE. And could you translate it readily?

MARIE. Oh, it means nothing, really —[*makes one or two attempts*] — "here" — no!

"I look here and I look there — where may be my lover?
Rid wid wil dai dai — Nowhere is my lover!"

BRAUER [*enters during this, unseen by her, puts arms around her. She shrieks*]. There, there — [*caressing her*] Patience, my darling, some day you will have one — perhaps very soon. Why, what's the matter, dear?

MARIE [*leans on him in tearless sobbing*]. Oh, you have frightened me so!

BRAUER. What is the matter with you this morning? What has happened?

MARIE. I have already told you, nothing.

BRAUER. Tut, tut! something has gone wrong! I can see it — and now, I demand that you tell me the truth.

MARIE. Well, then — yes!

BRAUER. What is it? Come, come, out with it.

MARIE. Some one attacked me.

BRAUER. Attacked you?

MARIE. Not far from here.

BRAUER. As you came from the station?

MARIE. Yes.

BRAUER. Well, I never — but every one around here knows you and your character; how did he look? was it a vagabond?

MARIE [*hesitatingly*]. N — No. It was — a gentleman ——

BRAUER. Did he lay hands on you, or even try to touch you?

MARIE. No.

BRAUER. But you say he attacked you?

MARIE. Attacked me — yes!

BRAUER. You mean he followed you?

MARIE. Yes.

BRAUER. How far?

MARIE. As far as the gate, which I opened quickly, and then he disappeared.

BRAUER [*to the others*]. Now, what do you say to that? [GEORGE *shrugs his shoulders*] There is something queer about it all. [*To* MARIE] And that is what upset you so?

MARIE. Oh, I am already much composed.

BRAUER [*raises her head*]. Yes — you look it.

GERTRUDE. Oh, papa, don't torment her so.

BRAUER. Now, then, go and take a good nap.

MARIE. Not yet, papa dear, I can't. I must speak with George first. About the large bookcase — I really don't know where to place it.

BRAUER. But you can do that later, can't you?

MARIE. I fear I might forget it.

BRAUER. Very well; I am going down to look after the cow. Will you come, wife?

MRS. BRAUER [*rising and putting up her handwork*]. Yes, dear.

BRAUER [*to* MARIE]. And one thing more, — don't you put your foot outside of the gate without an escort hereafter! Understand? Not once!

MARIE. But why not, papa dear?

BRAUER. After what has happened? But I never heard of such a thing — never, as long as I ——

MRS. BRAUER. But, Henry, in broad daylight, it is hardly necessary ——

BRAUER. No matter; I have my reasons for that; besides — well, I'll tell you later.

MRS. BRAUER [*in passing taps* MARIE *on cheek*]. Now, pet, go and take a good rest. [*Both exit*]

MARIE. You must go, too, Gertrude!

GERTRUDE [*peevishly*]. But why should I?

MARIE. You know, dear, your future home ——

GERTRUDE. Ah, yes; those stupid furnishings! Do you know, I don't think a wedding half so much fun as Christmas. Now don't be long, will you? [*Exit*]

[*Pause*]

GEORGE. Why so deep in thought, suddenly?

MARIE. I ——? Oh, I was thinking. I was picturing to myself that cosy little nook, your corner room!

GEORGE. Marie, dear, how can I ever thank you for all the ——

MARIE. Don't speak of it, George, for I take delight in having the furniture moved about; and then, I say to myself: "Here is where they will take their tea, and there they will while away their leisure hours" — so —— But, what I meant to tell you! Yesterday we had an accident — the large mirror in the parlor was broken. I know it portends ill ——

GEORGE. What care I, so long as our friendship will not be broken.

MARIE. But why should it?

GEORGE. It shall never be my fault, Marie.

MARIE. Certainly never mine. But what I wanted to say, — I had the large mahogany bookcase repolished. Is that satisfactory?

GEORGE. Anything you choose to do is satisfactory to me.

MARIE [*hesitatingly*]. And then — I must tell you, George, something important. When I unpacked the bookcase, I found a blue manuscript.

GEORGE [*unsuspecting*]. What kind of a manuscript?

MARIE. George, you must not leave that lying around — not even hidden behind the books, especially now, when you take your wife to your home.

GEORGE. In heaven's name, what manuscript?

MARIE. I believe — it contains some poems ——

GEORGE. You believe — it contains some poems. I have missed it since early last winter; I thought I had lost it. Marie, now tell me truthfully, have you read its contents?

MARIE. N — no!

GEORGE. Then why do you tell me not to leave it around?

MARIE. Well, I read the first part, and had begun on the second, when I concluded to go no further.

GEORGE. And you really looked no further than the first? Absolutely no further?

MARIE. No.

GEORGE. Can you swear to that?

MARIE. I can!

GEORGE. Then swear!

MARIE. I swear! Are you satisfied?

GEORGE. Yes, thank heaven! But you must not imagine for a moment that the book contains anything I am ashamed of; on the contrary, I consider it so sacred I would not have it desecrated by a stranger's eye. About four years ago, something occurred within me — within my soul. No one knows — no one could even guess, and no one shall ever know.

MARIE. No one? Not even I?

GEORGE. No, not even you. But where is the book? Give it to me!

MARIE [*turns up stage and takes it from her bosom*]. Here it is.

GEORGE. How shall I ever thank you?

MARIE. I want you to do me one favor. Will you promise me?

GEORGE. If it's in my power, certainly!

MARIE. Then I must first confess to you. A few moments ago, when papa questioned me, I deceived him. I was attacked last night — yes — but not by a man, but by a woman — a Lithuanian woman. George, that woman was my mother!

GEORGE. But I understood your mother was dead.

MARIE. No, no; that is not so. Not one of you ever told me the truth. On the day of my confirmation I was waylaid by that very same woman — I cannot have been mistaken.

GEORGE. Come, tell me, how did it happen?

MARIE. I was walking along quietly — 'twas already dawning — when suddenly a gaunt form arose from the ditch beside the road. I looked, and saw before me a miserable beggar-woman, who called out to me in a trembling voice: "Marie — Madame — Daughter!" I turned cold in fear and horror, and, unable to utter one sound, I began to run; and I ran, ran, ran, and behind me I only heard her agonizing call: "My Marie — my daughter!" And so, I ran away from my own mother. And now, after a few hours' thought, I realize I did wrong. I must see her and speak to her, and learn from her own lips who and what I am; and as papa has forbidden me to leave this house — I would go in spite of him, but I have a fear — I beg of you, George dear, go to her, I implore you, find her for me — she cannot be far away, and ——

GEORGE. And then ——?

MARIE. Then bring her to me, into the garden, or, better still, into this room towards evening, when papa and mama are calling on the old pastor ——

GEORGE. Marie, I cannot do that!

MARIE. The first time I ask a favor of you — and you say you cannot do it?

GEORGE. Marie, dear, listen to me! You have been so kind to me of late — and that has not always been so; but if you had sacrificed for me even more than your own comfort and rest, I — I could not do it — I could not deceive your father and mother, for I fear the consequences.

MARIE. Then can't you understand that, a foundling though I am, a desire might come over me to see my own mother, though she be but a common beggar and an outcast? That I might want to lay my head on her shoulder and be petted and fondled, and cry myself to sleep on mine — on my own mother's breast?

GEORGE. Are you not fondled, are you not petted — has mama not always been kind to you?

MARIE. Yes, but it is not the same — not the same. Never have I felt the desire, the demand within me for my own flesh and blood, as just now.

GEORGE. But why just now?

MARIE [*imploringly*]. Because my heart is bursting. Oh, George!

GEORGE. I cannot. I dare not do it!

MARIE. Then you refuse me?

GEORGE. You know I must!!

MARIE. Then have you forgotten what took place in there, in your heart, four years ago? [*Pause*]

GEORGE. Marie, you have read my manuscript!

MARIE. Yes, I read it. Will you do it now?

GEORGE. Marie, you have sworn falsely!!!

MARIE [*shrugging her shoulders*]. Will you do as I ask?

GEORGE. 'Tis well! I will do as you ask!!!!

ACT II

The same scene as Act I.

[MARIE, *seated, with some linen in her lap, at the sewing-machine, looking dreamily out of the window*]

HOUSEKEEPER KATIE [*in door right*]. May I come in, Miss Marie?

MARIE. Oh, is that you? Yes, come in!

KATIE. I see you are working on Miss Gertrude's wedding outfit. How beautiful, fit for a princess. But what I wanted to ask you: Madame has given me the menu for the wedding feast, and as to fish, it calls for carp. Now you know I am economical, but carp — common carp ——

MARIE. Why, carp is a very fine fish ——

KATIE. Oh yes, and good enough for — say — your wedding feast; but not good enough for Miss Gertrude.

MARIE. For my wedding feast even carp is too good.

KATIE. Oh no; carp is not too good for you, though it may be good enough — and do you know I will prepare a special Polish sauce — but Miss Gertrude — she must have deep sea fish. Now will you see Madame about that, please?

MARIE. Very well, I will speak to mama about it.

KATIE. And you are not offended?

MARIE. Oh no!

KATIE. For, after all, you know, you are only a foundling.

MARIE. Oh yes, I know.

KATIE. But we all love you, Miss Marie, and ——

MARIE. Thank you. But have you seen Mr. von Harten this morning?

KATIE. No, I have not! But I have some good news for you — the assistant pastor has fallen deeply in love with you.

MARIE. Yes?

KATIE. And he is going to ask for your hand!!! I always said you were a lucky girl. Just think, you may be a St. John's-bride.

MARIE. And what is a St. John's-bride?

KATIE. *You* don't know that, Miss Marie? Well, I'll tell you. It is written in the new seal of Solomonis: "Whoever shall give or receive their first kiss on St. John's eve, their love is sealed and they will be faithful unto death." So it is written in the new seal of Solomonis.

GERTRUDE [*enters centre, hands behind her, with bouquet*]. Marie, I have something for you. No, first I want Katie to leave the room. Go now, go!!!

KATIE. Oh, I am going — I am going!!!!!!!! [*Exit*]

GERTRUDE. Shut your eyes now! [MARIE *does so, as* GERTRUDE *holds bouquet to* MARIE'S *face*] Now what is it?

MARIE. The tulip-tree! the first blossoms from our manzanillo-tree! It blooms — it blooms!!! [*Burying her face in the flowers*]

GERTRUDE. Are you glad, Marie?

MARIE. Yes, darling, so glad!!! Thank you!

GERTRUDE. And do you know who picked them? — George!

MARIE. For me?

GERTRUDE. Why, of course, for you!

MARIE. He — did this — for me?

GERTRUDE. He would do even more than that for me, I am sure!

MARIE. Oh yes, certainly! But where is he now?

GERTRUDE. I don't know!

MARIE. Did he say he had to go somewhere?

GERTRUDE. Yes, he had to go out on the fields, he said — and that was quite some time ago. I wanted to accompany him; I begged and begged, but he flatly refused to let me go.

MARIE [*breathing heavily*]. Oh!!!!!!!!

GERTRUDE. I don't know how it is; but to-day he is acting so strangely. Papa has asked for him several times — and do you know, dear, at times he is not at all pleasant to me!

MARIE. But why should he ——

GERTRUDE. That's just it! why should he? Oh, if I only knew — if I was only certain he loved me — and then, another thing — I don't know if I should tell you — I have a growing fear some other girl will take him away from me.

MARIE [*with forced laugh*]. Away from you, dear? how could that be possible?

GERTRUDE. Oh yes, you may laugh; but at times, when he looks at me, I see a strange look come in his eyes. Half affection — half pity — and I don't want to be pitied! Why should he? Am I not happy?

MARIE [*caressing her*]. Yes, dear; you ought to be very, very happy.

GERTRUDE. But I cannot rid myself of the fear, perhaps he really loves another and is only taking compassion on me! Oh, if I only knew ——

MARIE. But, my darling ——

GERTRUDE. For you see, I am still so young — and think, how ill-mannered I was only this morning! I was so sorry

afterwards — but I do love to laugh. [*Laughs*]

MARIE [*with strange, desperate tone of voice*]. And you shall laugh — laugh — laugh — so — so — !!!!!!!

GERTRUDE. Mama, too, insists that my love for him is only that of a child and not of a woman and a bride; but you see she would rather I'd not marry at all and so remain at home with her all my life. But you will be good to her, won't you? You will soon be her only one.

MARIE. I ——?

GERTRUDE. Why yes!

MARIE. I shall soon know whose only one I am!

GERTRUDE. What are you saying?

MARIE [*as* GEORGE *enters*]. There he is!

[GERTRUDE *runs towards him.* MARIE *takes a few steps, then hesitates and stops*]

GERTRUDE [*pulling him, as she runs toward him*]. Oh, George!!! [*Then*] Confound you ——!

GEORGE [*reproachfully*]. *Gertrude!!!!!*

GERTRUDE [*crushed*]. Why, what did I say?

GEORGE [*lovingly*]. Now listen to me, little one. Such language may be excusable in your papa, but never in my bride.

GERTRUDE [*pouting*]. Everything I say seems to displease you. You never find fault with Marie! You can go and marry her!!!

GEORGE. Marie does not want to marry me.

MARIE. My very best thanks, George!

GEORGE. For what?

MARIE [*picking up bouquet*]. For this!

GEORGE. Oh, don't mention it.

MARIE. Were you out in the fields?

GEORGE. Yes.

GERTRUDE. Yes, papa is angry with you, too. He is looking for you!

GEORGE. Oh yes — I know ——! Well?

MARIE. In what direction did you go?

GEORGE. I have been everywhere.

MARIE. And have you found ——?

GERTRUDE. What was he to find?

GEORGE. Yes, what was I to find? —— But, children, your tulip-tree is certainly a strange fellow. There he stands, blooming alone, like the last rose of summer ——

GERTRUDE. My great-grandfather brought it from South America!

GEORGE [*to* MARIE]. And that is why you love it so, because it is so foreign and strange?

MARIE [*busy with linen*]. Perhaps!

GERTRUDE. No, that is not the reason ——

MARIE. Well then, what is it?

GERTRUDE. I'm going to tell on you. One day papa took her to the Opera, down in the city; there they saw the African ——

GEORGE. "L'Africaine," you mean?

GERTRUDE. Yes, yes, that's what she called it.

MARIE. Gertrude, please don't ——

GERTRUDE. In that play occurs a poison-tree — I think ——

GEORGE. Yes, a manzanillo-tree!

GERTRUDE. Yes, yes; and whosoever inhales the odor of its blossoms must die. And do you know what she did? Oh, yes, I did the same — we would go to this tree, smell of its blossoms, and lay down ——

GEORGE. To die?

GERTRUDE. To die.

MARIE. Now you can imagine, George, how long ago that must have been.

GERTRUDE. Yes, it was long, long ago. But about four years ago, one day, Marie really wanted to die very badly.

[MARIE *casts a frightened glance at* GEORGE, *who returns it thoughtfully*]

GERTRUDE. But we didn't.

GEORGE. No, no, thank heaven. Now, little one, run along and tell papa that I am here.

GERTRUDE. Marie, will you come, too?

MARIE. No; I think I will remain here a little while longer.

GERTRUDE. Then I'll stay, too.

GEORGE. Now, little one ——

[GERTRUDE *exits with a sigh*]

MARIE [*quickly and suppressed*]. Did you find her? [GEORGE *nods*] Will she come? Why don't you answer?

GEORGE. Marie, when you exacted this promise from me this morning, I did not realize what it meant. I had never seen your — I don't want to speak that word — I had never seen this person until to-day. She must not come to this house, secretly — she must not!!!

MARIE. George!!!

GEORGE. Take uncle into your confidence, at least.

MARIE. No, no one — no one but you!!

GEORGE. What do you want with her? You know you belong to this house. Here you have everything your heart desires. Here you have love — here you have ——

MARIE [*interrupts him*]. Bread! Why don't you say it? Yes, here I have bread!

GEORGE. I did not mean to say that.

MARIE. No; but I did! And do I not earn it, as well as the little love I obtain in this house? I am "The Calamity Child" — and I do not ask for charity.

GEORGE. You seem to be possessed of the very devil to-day!

MARIE. Perhaps!

GEORGE. I implore you, do not insist. I fear the consequence. You will see! for whatever is done against nature, punishes itself.

MARIE. And is it against nature when a child cries out for its own mother?

GEORGE. She is not your mother; your mother is in this house.

MARIE. Gertrude's mother is in this house, not mine. A mother must feel for her child, she must see ——

GEORGE. Sh — sh!

[*Enter* GERTRUDE]

GERTRUDE. You two are continually talking in whispers; can't you tell *me?* It makes me so unhappy!

MARIE [*caressing her*]. But, darling, it is all done for your sake!

[*During this,* GEORGE *looks at her disapprovingly, while* MARIE *casts a timid glance at him*]

BRAUER [*enters*]. At last you have come. Where in thunder have you been all day? It almost seemed to me as if you were trying to avoid me!

GEORGE. But, uncle ——

BRAUER. Well, girls, have you prepared the pastor's egg-nog?

MARIE. Oh, I had entirely forgotten it.

BRAUER. Then see to it at once. And don't forget the sugar, you know.

MARIE. Yes, papa.

BRAUER. And Gertrude dear, you can go and help her. It is time you were learning to do something yourself.

GERTRUDE. Yes, papa!

MARIE. I hardly think it will be ready in time to take with you and mama.

BRAUER. Then bring it later — yourself.

MARIE [*with a glance at* GEORGE]. Could not Gertrude bring it, papa? I have so much work to do!

GERTRUDE. No, no, papa!!!

BRAUER. Yes, yes, you shall! — bring it up when done; and mind, you remain at the pastor's as long as your mother and I, this time. Understand?

GERTRUDE. Oh, papa dear! The last time, the old pastor insisted upon holding my hand in his so long; and they are so cold and clammy, so shriveled and hairy, like the hands of the dead!

BRAUER. Come here, my child. Those hairy hands once christened you, and at your confirmation the same shriveled hands were laid upon your head and invoked for you the blessings of heaven; and would you, after all that, refuse to hold them in your own warm young hands? My daughter, I do not wish to hear that again. [*Kisses her*]

MARIE [*slowly has approached* GEORGE. *Softly, aside to him*]. You will do as I ask?

BRAUER. And now, leave us. [MARIE *and* GERTRUDE *exit*] "Now, then, comes your turn," says the stork to the worm.

GEORGE [*looking after the girls, turns*]. I suppose so, but take a care, uncle, I am not so easily digested.

BRAUER. We shall see! We shall see!

GEORGE. What do you want with me? My financial condition is satisfactory. I have a good position, and my future is assured. I desire to enjoy the results of my *own* labors, not those of yours.

BRAUER. So, so!

GEORGE. Yes, dear uncle. If you were so determined upon giving a large dowry, you should have found another husband for Gertrude than myself.

BRAUER [*riled*]. Oh, hang you and your confounded pride!

GEORGE. Yes, I am proud; and because of my pride and determination, and, I may say, defiance, I have become what I am!

BRAUER [*rather arrogantly*]. And was there no diligence?

GEORGE. That, also, was nothing but defiance.

BRAUER. I almost believe you are determined to create another rumpus, as you did twelve years ago.

GEORGE. If necessary, yes!

BRAUER. And was it necessary, even then?

GEORGE. *You* ask me that question? When one day I came here, during vacation from college, you insisted upon my attending your church. I refused. You gave me my choice, either to do as you asked, or have my allowance cut off. Then I resolved in my mind never to comply with your command, in spite of everything. Oh, it is no pleasure to hunger, as I was forced to do then; but you may believe me, as I stand before you now, a free and independent man, I owe all of it to my stubborn confidence in myself, looking neither to right nor left, but straight ahead, without concessions, without falsehoods, always able to look every man straight in the face. And this good conscience is my proudest possession. From it do I draw all my strength, and I will never give it up.

BRAUER. Well, who the devil asked you to give it up?

GEORGE. And one thing more. Of course, I belong to this house; fate has made it my lot. Therefore it has ever been far from my mind to seek a wife elsewhere, so strongly attached do I feel myself to this house; and that would have been impossible, had I not from that day been a free man. And now, dear uncle, you are at heart a good and kind man; but your hand is heavy, and it must not lie upon me again as that of the master. For that reason do I refuse to touch even one penny of the dowry, now or any other time.

BRAUER. So, so! Then you are really afraid of me?

GEORGE. Afraid of you? Bah!!!

BRAUER. And at heart you are nothing but a coward!!

GEORGE. Uncle, I forbid you ——

BRAUER. *You* forbid me? Ha! This is my house, and here I am the master!

[GEORGE *shrugs his shoulders*]

BRAUER. Yes, yes; it seems to annoy you to have any one keep an eye on you and your conduct ——

GEORGE. My life has been as an open book to this day.

BRAUER. But after to-day — what about that? Who can look into the future? Who can look into your heart and read your thoughts? Who knows what may happen over night, eh?

GEORGE. Uncle, these are insults I will not endure, even from you ——

BRAUER. *Well!* What then! Come on! [*Jumps up, facing him, ready to fight*]

MRS. BRAUER [*enters, ready to go out, dressed*]. Henry, what on earth have you done to Gertrude? She is in her room, crying as if her heart would break.

[MARIE *has also come in with* MRS. BRAUER]

BRAUER. How is the egg-nog getting on, Marie?

MARIE. It is not quite done, papa!

BRAUER. Then let her have her cry; she can bring it up later.

MARIE. Yes, papa.

MRS. BRAUER. And are you ready?

BRAUER. Ready for what?

MRS. BRAUER. Are you ready to go now?

BRAUER. Well, wait for me out on the veranda; we have something to settle first, we two!

MRS. BRAUER. What's the matter with George?

BRAUER. Oh, I have just asked him for an explanation, and that does not seem to please him.

MRS. BRAUER [*caressing him*]. Don't you mind him, George dear. After the wedding you can laugh at him.

BRAUER. Well, we shall see about that!!!

[MRS. BRAUER *and* MARIE *exit*]

BRAUER. We can't go on like this, for I fear the consequences; but, nevertheless, I shall handle you without gloves.

GEORGE. Well?

BRAUER. My child loves you. You are her ideal, her all, and the wedding must take place. But tell me, what right have you to all this pride — I might even say arrogance?

GEORGE. Must I perhaps ask your permission ——?

BRAUER. That is the same old defiance, the same unreasonable stubbornness of your father's ——!!!!!

GEORGE [*starts*]. My father has been dead these twenty years — what do you want of him now?

BRAUER. What do I want of him? That he left you to me, to bring up from childhood, I will hardly mention; although that ought to be sufficient to temper your untamable pride — at least towards me; but ——

GEORGE. Uncle, you may abuse me as much as you please, but my father

I will not have disturbed! My father — you shall let him rest in peace!

BRAUER. And who was it — who took care — who made it possible, that he could rest in peace?

GEORGE. Uncle, what do you mean?

BRAUER. Well then, who was it, when he laid there, dead, before us, who paid his debts of honor and saved your father's name from disgrace?

[*Pause*]

GEORGE. Uncle, you should not have said that!

[*Sinks in chair and covers his face with his hands*]

BRAUER. My boy —— [*Emotion stops him from saying more — walks about*] See here —— [*Again the same — tries to light a cigar, breaks it and throws it away*]

GEORGE. You should not have said that, uncle! No, no ——

BRAUER. My God, you knew of it?

GEORGE. Yes, I knew of it, and yet you should not have said it; you should not have repeated it. Twelve years ago, in our quarrel, when you raised your whip to me — and I reached for the carving-knife — no, no — I should not have done *that*. You should not have raised your whip, nor I the knife. That is the reason I refused anything from you at all. Now you know it. From that day I swore to scratch the gold from the ground with my finger nails and fling it in your face. From that day I hated you — and rightly so!

BRAUER. And all that because I saved your father's name and yours from dishonor and disgrace?

GEORGE. *No!* But because you turned that same deed into a weapon to crush my youthful pride.

BRAUER. My boy, one uses the weapon nearest to hand.

GEORGE [*bitterly*]. Even if it is only a whip. But then, I see my mistake. I have no right to pride; my fatherly inheritance does not permit it. Give me your gold! I'll take it! All — all ——!

BRAUER. No, no; in your present state of mind I will force nothing on you. You might again turn to hating me.

GEORGE. Ah no, dear uncle, that is past. Hereafter, I will swallow my pride.

BRAUER. My boy ——

MARIE [*enters*]. Pardon me, papa, but mama asks if you are not yet ready to go?

BRAUER [*with a glance at* GEORGE]. Well, as far as I am concerned, I am ready now! [*Takes his hat*] Marie, give him a glass of brandy to brace him up. [*Goes to door and returns*] George?

GEORGE. Uncle? [BRAUER *offers his hand*] My hand I cannot refuse you.

BRAUER [*goes to door. In door*]. Yes, and your heart, too, I will win again — or I'll be damned!!!!

[*Exits, slamming door*]

MARIE. What did he say to you, George?

GEORGE. Do not ask me, do not ask me! [*Walks about*] All these years I have struggled and deprived myself with only one thing in view — to be free — free — and yet I must bow — I must bow. If it were not for the sake of this beautiful child, who is innocent of it all, I would be tempted to —— But the die is cast, the yoke is ready — and so am I!!!!!!!

MARIE [*softly and hesitating*]. But, George, dear, here in this house, I see nothing for you but love — the yoke seems so light ——

GEORGE. How pious and tame you have suddenly become!

MARIE. I am not pious.

GEORGE. What was that you said a few moments ago? "I am the calamity child. I am the child of misery; but I do not ask for charity." That is what you said of yourself, and it is also true of me. I, *too*, am a child of misery, a calamity child; but I *am* a subject of charity. I accept all they have to give — all — all — ha, ha, ha ——!

MARIE. You, George, a calamity child?

GEORGE. Yes! Was I not picked up from the street, as my uncle so kindly informed me for the second time — like yourself? Do I not belong to this house, and am I not smothered with the damnable charity of my benefactors, like yourself?

MARIE. I receive my share with thanks.

GEORGE. And you enjoy serving ——

MARIE. I enjoy serving!!

GEORGE. But I — I wish to rule — to command!!!

MARIE. And you shall rule — you shall command ——

GEORGE [*walking about and ironically*]. Ah yes!!!

MARIE [*timidly*]. George?

GEORGE. Well?

MARIE [*the same*]. Pardon me; but have you forgotten ——?

GEORGE. Oh, I see!

MARIE. I know it is wrong in me to annoy you at this time, when you are so occupied with affairs of your own —— Besides, you have already refused me once ——

GEORGE. Wha — yes, now in spite of them all, I am my own master. I am responsible to no one. I have promised you — I shall keep my word!!!!!

MARIE. Thank you, George!

GEORGE. Oh, don't thank me ——

MARIE. Where is she now?

GEORGE. She is waiting behind yonder garden hedge.

MARIE. My God! Do not keep her waiting any longer; call her in here.

GEORGE. Gertrude is still in the house.

MARIE. I will get her out of the way. When I appear out there on the veranda, the coast is clear!!

GEORGE. Marie, for your own sake, I warn you for the last time; discovery means certain disaster.

MARIE. One disaster more or less, it matters little!

GEORGE. Is that your last word? Very well, I will bring her to you.

[*Gets his hat and goes out centre door*]

MARIE [*opens door left and calls out*]. Gertrude! Gertrude!

[*A door is heard to open*]

GERTRUDE [*outside, with crying voice*]. What is it?

MARIE. Come quickly, or papa will be angry!

GERTRUDE [*after a moment's pause*]. I am coming! [*Another short pause and she appears in door*]

MARIE. How red your eyes are! You have been crying! What's the matter, dear? [*Caressing her*]

GERTRUDE. Where is George?

MARIE [*lightly*]. He went out again a few moments ago.

GERTRUDE. And he didn't ask to see me?

MARIE. He heard you were crying and did not want to disturb you.

GERTRUDE. But, Marie, what is the matter with your own eyes? And you look so queerly ——

MARIE. My pet, they are the eyes that God has given me and ——

GERTRUDE [*suspiciously*]. What?

[*A knock at door is heard*]

MARIE. Come in!

MAID SERVANT [*enters with basket*]. Here are the egg-nog and cakes for the pastor. Now be careful and don't crush them!

MARIE. Very well!

[*Exit* SERVANT]

GERTRUDE [*taking basket*]. Good-by, Marie!

MARIE. Good-by, Gertie dear!

[GERTRUDE *starts towards centre door*]

MARIE [*frightened*]. Where are you going?

GERTRUDE. I am going through the garden across the fields; perhaps I will meet George.

MARIE [*concerned*]. No, no; you must not walk across the fields alone. Papa has forbidden it.

GERTRUDE. But I may meet George.

MARIE. But if you shouldn't, what then? No, no, I will not allow it! I will not! I had such a fright last night.

GERTRUDE [*goes up to the other door and turns back once more*]. Marie, you are not angry with me?

MARIE [*embracing her*]. My darling!!!

GERTRUDE. Then I will go that way! [*Looks all around*] Give my love to George!

MARIE. But I won't see him, dear ——

GERTRUDE. Well perhaps you may!

MARIE. In that case, I will tell him ——

GERTRUDE. Very well. [*Exit right*]

[MARIE *goes out on veranda — gives sign — returns — locks doors right and left — then at centre — in terror, with searching eyes, she slowly retreats backwards, her eyes glued on the outer darkness — until she finally covers her face with her hands, and is standing against the wall*]

GEORGE [*enters*]. Here she is!!

GYPSY [*enters.* GEORGE *goes out on veranda, looking off*]. Mine lady, mine daughter — yes — don't be afraid. Oh, you are such a fine lady — you have lover — you marry, they say ——?

MARIE [*forcing herself to speak*]. No; I'm not to be married! It is Gertrude, my foster-sister.

GYPSY. You no marry, eh? Never mind — you marry some day — some day. [*Examining* MARIE'S *dress with her fingers*] What a fine dress you have,

and all wool —— [*Same with apron*] Oh, and a silk apron — all silk! Give me, give me?

[MARIE *takes it off and gives it to her*]

GYPSY. Thank you — thank you!!! [*Kisses* MARIE'S *sleeve and dress, but when she would kiss her hand,* MARIE *withdraws it quickly*]

MARIE. No, no! *Ne dosu ranka!*

GYPSY. All right, all right! You are fine lady. [*Looks about*] Is the old man home, eh?

MARIE. No, he is out.

GYPSY. That is good, that is good! He is an old devil — is the old man! All Prussians are devils. But he have fine house, he have! Like a prince!!! [*Rubs her hand over table cover*] Ah, nice shawl that would make ——. [*Sees linen*] And what fine linen — [*Motions to* MARIE] Come here!

MARIE [*approaching her*]. What do you want?

GYPSY [*pointing with thumb*]. Give me an drink — just an little drink! [*Indicates with finger and thumb*]

[*While* MARIE *turns to sideboard, she quickly takes two or three pieces of linen and with left hand holds them hidden under her apron*]

GYPSY [*after taking drink from* MARIE]. Thanks, mine daughter, thanks! [*After drinking, rubs her stomach*] Ah, that's good, that's good! — Give me another! [MARIE *fills another glass for her — she drinks it*] Thank you, thank you!! But now I must be going!

[*In her anxiety to get out she drops one piece, while going to the door*]

MARIE [*horrified*]. Mo — mo — what were you trying to do?

GYPSY [*pretending surprise*]. My, my — just see! I found this out on the field. [*Picks it up and puts it under her arm*]

MARIE. Put that down, it is not yours.

GYPSY [*doing so*]. All right, all right — my — my — my ——

MARIE. Put down all you have!

GYPSY. I have no more, no, no more, I swear!

MARIE [*goes quickly to door and calls*]. George!

GEORGE [*enters*]. Well?

MARIE. Give me some money! [*He gives her a gold piece*] [MARIE *to her mother*] Here, here is money; now give me the linen ——

GYPSY [*takes the money as she gives up the linen, greedily*]. A ducat! A whole ducat! A golden ducat! Mine daughter, thank you!

MARIE. And now, go!

GYPSY [*goes anxiously to the door*]. All right, all right!!!

[*Throws a kiss to* MARIE, *and quick exit*]

MARIE [*quickly takes key from board*]. George, take this key and lock the garden gate after her, so she does not return.

[GEORGE *exits.* MARIE *looks after them, then slowly returns to the table, leans against same, and stares vacantly. Knock is heard at door left*]

MARIE [*mechanically*]. Come in!

SERVANT [*trying the door from the outside*]. The door is locked!

[MARIE *opens the door*]

SERVANT [*enters with dishes*]. It is time to lay the table for supper — will you help me, please? Why, what's the matter? You are not listening to me ——

MARIE. Never mind, Lena, I will set the table myself!

SERVANT. Will you? Very well!!!

[*Exit* SERVANT]

GEORGE [*enters. To* MARIE, *who does not stir*]. Remember what I told you. But come, come, this will never do! Don't stare at me like that ——

MARIE [*leaning on him and weeping*]. Oh, George!

GEORGE [*stroking her hair*]. That's it, dear, the tears will relieve you! Ah, I well know the anguish of an aching heart!

MARIE. Yes, you know, you know all! Now I have no one in this whole world but you — you alone. [*As she bursts out crying she throws herself on his breast*]

GEORGE [*stroking her hair*]. Yes, yes; we two understand each other. We two were meant, were intended for each other. Were we not, dear?

MARIE. My God! Yes!!

GEORGE. And we will ever remember this day — the day that brought us together. It is the day before St. John's Eve. Will you remember it, dear?

[*Short pause.* MARIE *silent, then struggles to free herself*]

MARIE. Don't, George! Go away! Please don't!

GEORGE [*embarrassed*]. But why should I suddenly go away, Marie?

MARIE. Go, George, I beg of you! I must lay the table!! Now go!

GEORGE. Marie, you said yourself you had no one but me!

MARIE. If you do not want to despise me, please go ——

GEORGE [*with forced laugh*]. I despise you? Very well — I'll go ——

[*Turns once more in the door and hesitatingly exits*]

[MARIE *breaks down, weeping*]

ACT III

Same setting. Above the centre table a lighted hanging-lamp. Another lamp on table, left. The glass doors to garden are open. Full moonshine falls partly into the room. At rise of curtain, at table, left, are BRAUER, MRS. BRAUER *and* PASTOR. *At centre table,* GERTRUDE *and* GEORGE. *It is evening.*

BRAUER. Now, then, tell Marie to bring the bowl!

PASTOR. Ah! you are going to have a bowl?

MRS. BRAUER. Why, of course, Pastor. This is St. John's Eve. The villagers will set off tar-barrels and bonfires, and we will celebrate it with a bowl.

BRAUER [*mischievously*]. But perhaps this festival is too heathenish for the clergy ——

PASTOR. Bless you, that all depends. If you have not the clergy's sanction, then it is wicked and heathenish ——

BRAUER. But if they are invited, then it is Christianly and good? Ha, ha ——!

PASTOR. Well, I did not say that. You had better apply to the consistory; they are better able to decide that point.

BRAUER. Ah, Pastor, you are a diplomat. Well, what are you two doing over there? You are not saying a word.

GERTRUDE. George is too lazy. He is drawing little men, and I am writing.

BRAUER. In his place I think I would prefer to draw little women. Eh, Pastor?

GEORGE. Just as you say, uncle!

BRAUER [*aside*]. What the devil is the matter with him to-day? Come, children, be jolly; this is St. John's Eve! Ah, here is the punch! Now, then, Gertrude, lend a hand!

[MARIE *has entered with the bowl and glasses*]

GERTRUDE. Yes, papa.

BRAUER [*drinks*]. Excellent, Marie! Superb! I tell you, Pastor, whoever gets her for a wife will be a lucky man indeed.

GERTRUDE [*with a glass to* GEORGE, *who has gone back and is looking out*]. Don't you want some, George?

GEORGE [*caressing her, with a shy glance at* MARIE]. Why, yes, little one, thank you! Look, how bright and beautiful the moon shines to-night! Everything wrapped as in silvery spider web! How beautiful!

MARIE [*oppressed*]. They will soon set off the bonfires.

BRAUER. See, see — at last you have spoken; I feared you had lost your tongue. Come here, my child. Get your glasses, all of you —— Your health! The Pastor shall give us a toast; yes, yes, Pastor! — a genuine pagan toast, well suited to this night! Now, tell me, my child, are you obliged to go to the city again to-night?

MARIE. Yes, papa dear.

BRAUER. But if I will not allow it?

MARIE. You gave your permission quite two weeks ago, papa dear!

BRAUER. But not to go in the middle of the night!

MARIE. I must go, papa. The men are to be there at seven in the morning, and if I am not there to give instructions the house will never be finished in time.

MRS. BRAUER. Never mind, Henry, there is no help for it.

BRAUER. But look at her!

MARIE. Why, papa, there is nothing the matter with me. I am well and merry — —

BRAUER. You are merry, eh? Let me hear you laugh!

MARIE [*tries to laugh*]. Ha, ha, ha ——!

BRAUER [*imitating her*]. Yes, yes, — ha, ha, ha ——!

MRS. BRAUER. Come here, my child. [*Strokes her hair*] Did you sleep well last night?

MARIE. Yes, mama.

BRAUER. But if this stranger should attack you again?

PASTOR. Pardon me, but what do I hear?

BRAUER. Oh, nothing of importance, Pastor. [*To* MARIE] You will take the one o'clock train ——

MARIE. Yes, papa.

BRAUER. There is another — at four — 'twill be daylight then ——

MARIE. But I would not reach the city in time.

BRAUER. Very well, you needn't go to bed, then. George can take you to the depot.

MARIE [*startled*]. George?

GEORGE [*startled and simultaneously*]. What — I?

BRAUER. Certainly! Why not?

PASTOR. Pray do not think me obtrusive; but I am at your service.

BRAUER. No, no, thank you, Pastor; your time will come some other day. [*Aside*] It will at least give him something to do. [*Meaning* GEORGE]

GERTRUDE. I want to go too, papa! I love moonshine promenades.

BRAUER. No, no, my pet. In the first place, it is very improper for lovers to be out so late at night, without a chaperon.

MARIE. I would much prefer to go alone. I am not at all afraid — and I do not wish to trouble George — or any one else ——

BRAUER. Any one else is out of the question, for in this house every one rises at five in the morning. [*To* GEORGE] Now, then, what excuse have you to offer?

GEORGE Excuse? I? Why, none at all, except that she does not want me to go. You heard it yourself!

BRAUER. Have you two been quarreling again?

MRS. BRAUER. Don't insist, Henry, if they don't want to ——

BRAUER. By the way, send for Mr. Paul — I wish to speak to him. Pastor, your health! [*Drinks*]

[*At this* MARIE *and* GERTRUDE *go to door centre, and speak to someone outside in pantomime. A voice is heard*]

VOICE. Mr. Paul! Mr. Paul!

PAUL [*from behind scene*]. I am coming in one moment! [*Short pause. He enters*] Here I am!

BRAUER. Ah, there you are! Give him a glass of punch!

PAUL. Thank you, I have just had a glass of beer.

BRAUER. Very well! Now, don't let us disturb you, children! Pastor, this is the time to prepare your toast. [*Aside to* PAUL] Well, have you learned anything of this stranger?

PAUL. Not a sign of one, excepting two tramps at the inn, the gendarme placed under arrest; but that was the day before yesterday.

BRAUER. H'm! If I had ever had the slightest reason to doubt her word —— Marie, my child, come here to me.

MARIE. Yes, papa!

BRAUER [*looks at her sharply*]. Never mind, now.

PAUL [*aside to* BRAUER]. By the way, I saw the old woman again!

BRAUER. Sh! not so loud! Where?

PAUL. She had money, too ——

BRAUER. I wonder where she stole it?

PAUL. I wonder! The innkeeper said she had a gold piece. But don't you worry, Mr. Brauer. She will soon give us cause to have her locked up again. She is incorrigible!

BRAUER. Does she sleep at the inn?

PAUL. No, sir! At night she leaves there, only to reappear in the morning.

BRAUER. H'm! that would almost be sufficient reason —— George!

GEORGE. Uncle?

BRAUER. I have changed my mind. You must accompany Marie!

GEORGE. Just as you say, uncle!

BRAUER. And no quarreling this time, Marie!

MARIE. Yes, papa.

GERTRUDE. [*On the veranda*] There, there, look! The first bonfire!!

[*Singing and laughter is heard in distance. A red glow is seen*]

MRS. BRAUER. Have you taken care, Mr. Paul, to keep them far enough away from the sheds?

PAUL. Yes, Mrs. Brauer!

MRS. BRAUER. For you must know, Pastor, last year the sparks came very near setting fire to the straw roofs.

GERTRUDE. There is a second one now, and there on the hill another. See, George, see! How beautiful!

GEORGE. Yes, yes, darling, I see!

GERTRUDE [*pulls him forward softly*]. Why do you call me darling to-day?

GEORGE. Well, sha'n't I?

GERTRUDE. Oh, of course; but do you love me more to-day?

GEORGE. I love you always, my pet!

GERTRUDE [*softly and with emotion*]. But you usually call me "little one," and to-day nothing but "darling."

BRAUER. Now, then, Pastor, we are ready for the toast! Take up your glass, and fire away!

PASTOR. I am afraid it will be hardly

as wicked and heathenish as you seem to expect.

BRAUER. Come, come, Pastor, don't keep us waiting!

PASTOR. Well, what shall I say? I am not going to preach you a sermon!

BRAUER. No, no, Pastor; we are content to wait for that till Sunday.

PASTOR. Well, then, you see, on a beautiful and dreamy night like this — may I say dreamy?

BRAUER. You may, Pastor, you may!

PASTOR. For we all dream at times, more or less, both young and old ——!

BRAUER. Ah, yes! that is a failing we all have!!!

PASTOR. On such a dreamy night, different emotions are aroused within us. We seem to be able to look into the future, and imagine ourselves able to fathom all mystery and heal all wounds. The common becomes elevated, our wishes become fate; and now we ask ourselves: What is it that causes all this within us — all these desires and wishes? It is *love*, brotherly love, that has been planted in our souls, that fills our lives; and, it is life itself. Am I not right? And now, with one bound, I will come to the point. In the revelation you will find: "God is love." Yes, God is love; and that is the most beautiful trait of our religion — that the best, the most beautiful within us, has been granted us by *Him* above. Then how could I, this very evening, so overcome with feeling for my fellowman — how could I pass *Him* by? Therefore, Mr. Brauer, no matter whether pastor or layman, I must confess my inability to grant your wish, and decline to give you a genuine pagan toast ——

BRAUER [*grasps his hand*]. That was well spoken, Pastor! Pardon me, I was only jesting!

GEORGE. No, no, dear uncle, not altogether. There I must defend you against yourself. A devout and pious man like yourself, 'twas not entire wantonness, your desire to hear something other than religious, and since the Pastor has so eloquently withdrawn, I will give you a toast. For you see, my dear Pastor, something of the old pagan, a spark of heathenism, is still glowing somewhere within us all. It has outlived century after century, from the time of the old Teutons. Once every year that spark is fanned into flame — it flames up high, and then it is called "The Fires of St. John." Once every year we have "free night." Then the witches ride upon their brooms — the same brooms with which their witchcraft was once driven out of them — with scornful laughter the wild hordes sweep across the tree-tops, up, up, high upon the Blocksberg! Then it is, when in our hearts awake those wild desires which our fates could not fulfill — and, understand me well, dared not fulfill — then, no matter what may be the name of the law that governs the world on that day, in order that that one single wish may become a reality, by whose grace we prolong our miserable existence, thousand others must miserably perish. Part because they were never attainable; but the others, yes, the others, because we allowed them to escape us like wild birds, which, though already in our hands, but too listless to profit by opportunity, we failed to grasp at the right moment. But no matter. Once every year we have "free night." And yonder tongues of fire shooting up towards the heavens — do you know what they are? They are the spirits of our dead and perished wishes! That is the red plumage of our birds of paradise we might have petted and nursed through our entire lives, but have escaped us! That is the old chaos, the heathenism within us; and though we be happy in sunshine and according to law, to-night is St John's night. To its ancient pagan fires I empty this glass. To-night they shall burn and flame up high — high — and again high ——! Will no one drink to my toast? [*Pause*]

MARIE [*trembling*]. I will! [*They look into each other's eyes and clink glasses*]

GERTRUDE [*hesitatingly*]. I, too, George!

GEORGE [*stroking her hair sadly, patronizing*]. Yes, yes; you, too.

BRAUER [*suddenly bursting out*]. You — you idiots! What do you know about it, anyway? I — I didn't understand it myself, but I have a presentiment there is something sinful about it all!

PASTOR. My dear Mr. von Harten, above all your heathenism watches our good old God, our Father, and therefore I fearlessly drink to your toast.

BRAUER. Well, well, I'll not be the only exception. [*Drinks also. A glow much nearer, behind the trees. Louder*

yelling and laughter] Well, what is it now?

PAUL. They are dangerously near the sheds now.

BRAUER. Didn't I tell you to take the proper precautions?

PAUL. I did. They had only three tar-barrels early this evening. Where they got the fourth from, I don't know.

BRAUER. I'll wager they found the barrel of axle-grease! Why didn't you lock it up?

PAUL. You know yourself, on this day no lock or key is of any avail.

BRAUER. Don't talk nonsense, but see what's to be done. I will be there myself, presently. Be quick! [PAUL *exits*] I can't depend on anybody these days! Where is my hat? [MARIE *gets it*]

GERTRUDE. Can't we go, too, papa?

BRAUER. Will you come, wife?

MRS. BRAUER. Yes, gladly, but stop scolding. There isn't a breath of air stirring, and therefore no danger.

BRAUER. Come along, Pastor!

[*Exit* BRAUER, GEORGE, GERTRUDE *and* MRS. BRAUER]

PASTOR. Won't you accompany us, Miss Marie?

MARIE. No, thank you, Pastor!

PASTOR. Then may I remain with you for a while?

SEVERAL VOICES [*outside, calling*]. Pastor, Pastor!

PASTOR [*speaks through door*]. I will be with you in a moment! [*To* MARIE] Well, may I?

MARIE. Why, certainly, if it gives you pleasure!

PASTOR. Pleasure is hardly the proper word. I wanted to thank you for insisting upon my writing the bridal-poem. It has been a work of pleasure, I assure you. Do you like it?

MARIE. It is very nice, Pastor!

PASTOR. Have you memorized it already?

MARIE. I think so!

PASTOR. Then would you mind reciting it for me? Come, I will assist you: "The flowers, the beautiful blossoms" —— Well? —— "are a maiden's ——"

MARIE. No, Pastor!

PASTOR. You are acting so strangely to-day! You are so shy — so ——

MARIE. The St. John's night oppresses me!

PASTOR. That will soon be over.

MARIE. Would that it were over now!

PASTOR. Perhaps the thought of traveling alone at night has something to do with it?

MARIE. Oh! [*Recovering herself — lightly*] You are right, Pastor, but it can't be helped!

PASTOR. Shall I come with you? Oh, I'll find something to be done in the city. I won't even have to ask permission. Anyway, I am longing for a glimpse of the good old town. I will inform the old pastor — I don't think he has retired as yet ——

MARIE. Then please tell him —— I usually visit him myself every day, but now, just before the wedding, it's impossible for me to call. Will you please tell him that? I am so fond of him! Tell him that, and in thought I kiss his hand.

PASTOR. Certainly. And may I accompany you?

MARIE. No, thank you, Pastor!

PASTOR. Now let us speak openly, Miss Marie. I have been watching you all the evening. You appear to me — what shall I call it? — like a mouse before a cat! You need a protector; some one in whom you can confide, some one ——

MARIE. And so you would like to be my father confessor! Eh, Pastor?

PASTOR. You know very well we do not have that institution in the Protestant Church, though at times it might prove a blessing ——

MARIE [*mischievously*]. And then again it might not?

PASTOR. You are quite right. We should all rely more upon ourselves ——

MARIE [*with emphasis*]. I do that, Pastor, I do!

PASTOR. Yes, my dear Marie — pardon me, I should not have said that — and yet I must speak frankly with you; you seem to have a fear — a dread ——

MARIE. Of the cat?

PASTOR. I wish I knew!!!

MARIE. But supposing I were the cat, who would then be the mouse?

PASTOR. That would be sinful and wicked in you!!!

MARIE. But one cannot be the cat and the mouse at the same time!

PASTOR. Yes, one can! But he who does, plays with his own destruction!

MARIE. And if one destroys one's self, who cares?

PASTOR. You should not talk like that, Miss Marie.

MARIE. Oh, it is all nonsense, all nonsense, for to-night is St. John's night. Do you see that fire yonder, Pastor? They had to put it out! But there, on the hill — look, there, there! How beautiful! How wild!

PASTOR. Yes, and when you look closely, it is nothing more than a mass of dirty lumber.

MARIE. For shame, Pastor!

PASTOR. Like every thing that blazes, except the sun ——

MARIE. You should not have said that, Pastor — you should not. I don't want it! I will not have you slander my St. John's fires! I want to enjoy it once — only once — then nevermore!!!

PASTOR [*disturbed*]. My dear Miss Marie, I do not understand the reason for your agitation, and I will not question you! But of your struggles — you shall know that you have a friend near you on whom you can rely, now and for all time to come. Marie, I don't know how to express myself; but I desire to shield and protect you all your life — I will worship you ——

MARIE. Pastor, do you know who and what I am?

PASTOR. I do!

MARIE. And who my mother is?

PASTOR. I know all!

MARIE. Pastor, how am I to understand this?

PASTOR. Marie, I know I should not have spoken, at least not now. I should have waited — it was stupid of me, I know; but I have such a fear — a fear for you. You are going to the city to-night and I don't know what may happen! But you shall know, before you go, where you belong, and that your future is assured!

MARIE [*with a sigh of relief — almost a sob*]. Ah — ah — ah ——!

PASTOR. Marie, I do not want an answer now. Besides, I must first notify my father. Though he is but a simple farmer, he shall not be slighted — Marie ——

MARIE [*shrinking — dully*]. Yes, that is — perhaps — what I need — ah! [*Sinks in chair*]

PASTOR. Why, what is the matter? Shall I get you a glass of water? Or would you prefer wine?

MARIE [*with an effort*]. Wine — wine — there — in the bowl! [*He helps her — she drinks*] Thank you! [*Stirred*] No one has ever waited on me before!

PASTOR. I will carry you upon my hands ——

MARIE. Very well, Pastor; but no one must know before the wedding!

PASTOR. Perhaps on the wedding day — at the wedding feast? Papa might make the announcement; that would be such a fitting occasion!

MARIE. No, no! I will have too much to do then.

PASTOR. Then, when the happy pair have gone?

MARIE [*with sudden, impulsive decision*]. Yes, when they have gone!

PASTOR [*takes her hand*]. Thank you, Miss Marie.

[*Voices are heard outside*]

MARIE. Sh — [*Withdrawing her hand*]

GERTRUDE [*enters*]. Ah, here you are, Pastor; we have been looking for you everywhere!

PASTOR. I am coming now, Miss Gertrude.

GERTRUDE. It's too late, Pastor, they are all returning!

PASTOR. Impossible! Well, well, how the time passes, and one hardly knows how!

MARIE [*embracing* GERTRUDE]. Will you forgive me, darling?

GERTRUDE [*timidly*]. I have nothing to forgive.

MARIE. Do not say that! I have done everything — everything — you must ——

[*Enter all*]

BRAUER. Well, my dear Pastor, time stands still for no one; so you had better stop excusing yourself and empty your glass. 'Twill all come out right in the end.

PASTOR. I think I had better go now; for here every one is making fun of me.

BRAUER. Pastor, I need hardly tell you that you are always welcome in this house.

PASTOR. I am sure of it, Mr. Brauer! If I did not think so, I would not take that matter so lightly ——

BRAUER [*jokingly threatens him with finger*]. Pastor ——

PASTOR [*with a happy glance at* MARIE]. Good night. [*Shakes hands with all*]

BRAUER. Good night!

PASTOR. Good night, Miss Marie!

MARIE [*shaking his hand*]. Good night, Pastor!

[GEORGE, *with a questioning glance, advances a step or two*]

BRAUER. George, see the Pastor to the gate!

GEORGE [*as though awakening*]. Yes, uncle.

[*Both exit*]

MRS. BRAUER. Well, Henry, everything has quieted down!

BRAUER. It's about time, too! Why, it's eleven o'clock! Come, let's to bed.

GERTRUDE. Good night, papa!

BRAUER [*affectionately*]. Good night, my pet!

MARIE. Good night!

BRAUER. By-the-bye — when will you be back?

MARIE. To-morrow, about ten, papa!

BRAUER. Now be careful; no unnecessary exertions — understand? The day of the wedding will be hard enough on all of us.

MARIE. Yes, papa dear! [*Kisses him*]

GEORGE [*enters at this moment*]. We have still an hour and a quarter till train time. I will wait for you here, Marie.

MRS. BRAUER. You might help each other pass away the time.

GERTRUDE. I want to sit up, too.

BRAUER. Tut, tut, my pet; you go to bed, you need the rest.

GERTRUDE [*whiningly*]. Well then, good night.

MARIE [*in silent fear*]. I can't stay here —— Mama, I want to ask you about something ——

GEORGE. Then you will come down in time for the train?

MARIE. Yes, in time for the train.

MRS. BRAUER. Good night, George.

GEORGE. Good night, auntie!

[*Exit* MRS. BRAUER, GERTRUDE, *and* MARIE]

BRAUER. You know where my cigars are?

GEORGE. Yes!

BRAUER. And if you need anything to keep you awake — I have left the key ——

GEORGE [*in monosyllables*]. Thank you!

BRAUER. Well, what in ——

GEORGE. What's the matter —— Oh, my dear uncle, if I have failed to pay you the necessary respect, I beg your pardon.

BRAUER. Respect? Oh, damn you and your respect!

GEORGE. Uncle ——

BRAUER. See here, perhaps I did wrong?

GEORGE. You — wrong? How?

BRAUER. Have you forgotten what passed between us yesterday?

GEORGE. My dear uncle, that seems to me so far, far away!

BRAUER. It strikes me you are going at a pretty fast gait!

GEORGE. At any rate, uncle, do not worry about it. It will all come out right in the end. [*As he is listening towards the door, gives a sudden start*]

BRAUER. What's the matter?

GEORGE. I thought I heard some one ——

BRAUER. Some one of the family perhaps, upstairs. Very well, then all is well, my boy! Good night, my son.

GEORGE. Good night, uncle!

[BRAUER *exits, shaking his head*]

GEORGE [*sits at table — tries to read — listens, goes to door centre — calls out softly into the garden*]. Who is there? [*Still softer*] Is that you, Marie?

GERTRUDE [*whining outside*]. It's only me!

GEORGE [*surprised*]. Gertrude, what do you want?

GERTRUDE [*enters in nightgown and flowing hair*]. I am so uneasy, George dear; I just wanted to look at you once more before going to sleep.

GEORGE. But, little one, if papa should see you like this —— Quick, go back to your room.

GERTRUDE. I cannot, my heart is so heavy.

GEORGE. How so, dear?

GERTRUDE. George, I have been thinking; I really am not good enough to be your wife.

GEORGE. Wha — what nonsense ——

GERTRUDE. I am too silly — oh, yes; I never know what to say to you! I am so stupid.

GEORGE. Why, my child — darling — pet ——

GERTRUDE. A while ago, out in the garden, and the moon shining so brightly, you walked by my side in deep silence ——

GEORGE. Why, mama was with us ——

GERTRUDE. George, it is yet time. If you love some one else ——

GEORGE. In heaven's name, child,

have you ever mentioned this to any one?

GERTRUDE. Only to papa; he was very angry and scolded me dreadfully.

GEORGE. H'm! Now listen to me, my pet ——

GERTRUDE. Rather than make you unhappy, I would jump into the river ——

GEORGE. In the first place, your presence here in this condition is decidedly improper ——

GERTRUDE. But we are to be married in three days ——

GEORGE. So much more reason. [*Stroking her hair*] What beautiful hair you have, dear!

GERTRUDE [*happily*]. Do you like it?

GEORGE. And in the second place, I will have none other than you. We will love each other very much. At first you will be my playmate — and then — later, perhaps — my real mate. Are you satisfied?

GERTRUDE. Yes, dear!

GEORGE. And now, you must go to bed!

GERTRUDE. Then I will wrap myself in my hair — and I will dream of you and what you said — that it is beautiful — and so I will fall asleep. Good night, George dear!

GEORGE [*kisses her on the forehead*]. Good night!

[*He gloomily takes position at table with a sigh when* GERTRUDE *exits, covering his face with his hands.* MARIE *enters softly*]

GEORGE. Marie, you have come ——

MARIE. It is early yet, is it not?

GEORGE. We have a full hour more. Have they all gone to bed?

MARIE. I think so. All the lights are out.

GEORGE. Come, sit here ——

MARIE. I — I — I think I will go back upstairs!

GEORGE. No, no; here is something to read! You see, I'm reading myself.

MARIE. Very well. [*Sits*] But, George, I would really prefer to go to the depot alone.

GEORGE [*softly*]. Marie! [*She shuts her eyes*] Are you tired? [*She shakes her head*] One whole hour I will have you all to myself!

MARIE. George ——

GEORGE. Marie!!!

MARIE. The fires have all gone out, I suppose?

GEORGE. Ah, yes; a small pyre of wood — it is soon burned down!

MARIE. And then it's as dark as ever!!! But, George, how beautifully you spoke this evening! I have never heard anything like it before.

GEORGE. You were the only one who understood me.

MARIE. No wonder! It was as though I spoke the words myself — that is, I don't mean to say ——

GEORGE. What, dear?

MARIE. Oh, you know!

GEORGE. But I don't know!

MARIE [*after a pause*]. George, I have something to confess to you. In fact, that is why I came down here so soon. You shall know it, you alone. I have this day given my hand ——

GEORGE [*with a start*]. *Marie!!!!*

MARIE [*astonished*]. Well?

GEORGE. To whom?

MARIE. Why, to the pastor! Who else could it be? There is no one else!

GEORGE [*reproachfully*]. Why did you do that? Why did you?

MARIE. I have my whole life before me, and the fires [*pointing to fields and to heart*] will not burn forever ——

GEORGE [*bitterly*]. You should not have done it — you — it is a ——

MARIE. Sh — not so loud!

GEORGE. But you do not love him at all!!!!

MARIE. How do you know?

GEORGE [*bitterly*]. How? Of course, how should I? I don't know! Pardon me! Well, I congratulate you!

MARIE [*quietly*]. Thank you!

GEORGE. But why am I the first one to be taken into your confidence? Why not uncle? We two have not been so intimate as ——

MARIE. No, we two have not been very intimate — I only thought ——

GEORGE. So, then, we have both our burden; and we soon will have to part. Therefore we can now safely speak of the past. My manuscript you read! You even went so far as to perjure yourself on account of it. Oh, you don't mind a little thing like that! I wish I were the same! You know the subject of my verses, and we must now understand each other fully. Now, tell me openly, why, why did you treat me so unkindly, to say nothing worse, in former days?

MARIE. Did I, George?

GEORGE. 'Tis hardly necessary to remind you of all the indignities you

heaped upon me. It almost seemed to me as if you purposely intended to drive me mad. Do you remember the day when I followed you into the cellar, and you turned and ran out and locked the door, and compelled me to remain there all night?

MARIE [*smiling*]. Yes, I remember!

GEORGE. Why did you do that?

MARIE. That is very simple. You are Count von Harten — and I? — I am but a poor Lithuanian foundling — aye, worse than that. If you follow such a one into the cellar, she knows, or at least thinks she knows, your purpose.

GEORGE. So, that was the reason! And at the same time you went under your manzanillo-tree to die?

[MARIE *nods*]

GEORGE. And did you never realize the real state of things? Gertrude was then still a child — and because I could not win you, I took her. Did that thought never occur to you?

MARIE. How could I ever dare to think that?

GEORGE. But later?

MARIE. The day before yesterday, when I read your book, I felt it for the first time.

GEORGE. And now, it is too late ——

MARIE. Yes, now it is too late! Had I felt then as I do now, I would not have resisted you ——

GEORGE. Marie, do you know what you are saying?

MARIE [*breaking out*]. Oh, I don't care, I don't care! It is my fate. You must rule and govern — and I — I must serve; and in the end — we both must die ——

GEORGE. Marie, you should be loved, you must be loved — beyond all senses — loved beyond all measure!

MARIE [*pointing towards right*]. He loves me!

GEORGE. He? — Bah!!!

MARIE. Don't be angry, George dear; you don't dare love me yourself. You can never be anything to me!

GEORGE. No, never; for this house must be kept clean. No, no, this house must not be soiled. We would both suffocate in our shame. But we can think of what might have been; that is not sin, is it?

MARIE. What were your words? "They are the wild birds of paradise that have escaped us." That was it, was it not? How beautiful!

GEORGE. I don't remember!

MARIE. But I am not a wild bird, George; I am tame — so tame ——

GEORGE. You are tame?

MARIE. For you, George dear, only for you!!!

GEORGE. *Marie*, my love! [*Strokes her hair affectionately, then moves away*] No, no, we must be strong! Only a few minutes ago, Gertrude came softly down those stairs; if she should come again — my God ——!

MARIE. What did she want?

GEORGE. You can imagine ——

MARIE. The poor thing! But you will love her?

GEORGE. As well as possible! But then I must not think of you.

MARIE. But you must not think of me — and I will try and not think of you!

GEORGE. Never, Marie?

MARIE. Only occasionally — on holidays ——

GEORGE. Only then?

MARIE. And on St. John's eve ——

GEORGE. When the fires are burning?

MARIE. Yes, and when the fires are out, then I shall cry ——

GEORGE. Marie!!!!

MARIE. No, no, George, sit still — I will sit here. Some one might be in the garden, after all.

GEORGE. They are all sound asleep!

MARIE. Even so! We must be brave; not for mine — but for your sake, George.

GEORGE. Why did you say that? What do you think of me?

MARIE. I think you are hard-hearted.

GEORGE. And yet you love me?

MARIE. Yes, I love you for your own sake. For you have had to struggle and fight — and that is what made you what you are. I have also fought and struggled; but I have lost faith in myself — lost faith in everything. If you only knew!! Sometimes I am afraid of myself — sometimes I would commit murder, so restless and without peace I am.

GEORGE. With me you would have found peace. We would have worked together and planned through half the nights — and you know how ambitious I am.

MARIE. And so am I, for you! You should be the first and greatest. They all shall bow before you — I myself will kneel before you and say to you: "You

love to rule and command? Now rule — now command!!!!!!"

[*Throws herself before him — her arms around his knees, looking up*]

GEORGE. Marie, in heaven's name rise! If any one should see you so ——

MARIE. Let them see me ——

GEORGE. *Marie!!*

MARIE [*rising*]. You are right. It was low in me. But he who originates where I do is low — so low ——

GEORGE. Don't think of it, Marie! Think of this house and all the love it has given you!

MARIE. How quiet everything is — not a sound to be heard — as silent as the grave ——

GEORGE. Then be content, for they have buried us together!

MARIE. If they only had ——!

GEORGE. And see the pale moon — how it throws its silvery rays over the garden — and yonder is your manzanillo-tree.

MARIE. Yes, yes, do you see it?

GEORGE. And its white, trembling leaves; see, see, each one seems alive — though not a breath of air is stirring. Come, let us go to it.

MARIE [*cowering*]. No, no, I think it is time — we must ——

GEORGE. Sh! — Sh ——!

MARIE. What is it?

GEORGE. There — something moved. It must be Gertrude. [*Goes to door centre and calls*] "Gertrude!!!"

[*Short pause*]

MARIE. You must have been mistaken!

GEORGE. No, no; I saw a shadow. "Gertrude!" Remain here, I'll go see! [*Exit into garden*]

MARIE. Oh, I'm so afraid, George — so afraid ——!

[*Pause*]

[GEORGE *returns, pale and agitated, trying to control himself*]

MARIE. Who was it? Who was it?

GEORGE. Oh, no one — no one ——

MARIE. Yes, there was — I can see it in your face!! Was it Gertrude?

GEORGE. No.

MARIE. Then it was papa?

GEORGE. No, no.

MARIE. George, you are as pale as death! What has happened? Tell me!

GEORGE. Nothing, nothing! There was a stranger in the garden — I sent him away.

MARIE. What stranger?

GEORGE [*pained*]. Do not ask me!

MARIE [*dully*]. Oh, I know — I know! It was — my mother ——

GEORGE. Well, since you have said it ——

MARIE. What did she want? But why do I ask? [*Covers her face with her hands*] Oh, my God — my God!!!!

GEORGE. *Marie!*

MARIE [*suddenly*]. Close the blinds — I have a fear — tight — so!! Now put up the bars — so — and here, so — so ——

GEORGE [*embracing her*]. *Marie!* my darling!!!!

MARIE. Hold me tight!!!

GEORGE. Like this?

MARIE. Yes, like that! [*She moves close to him*] Here I want to sit still ——

GEORGE [*looks at watch*]. If we only have time to catch that train —— [*The whistle of a locomotive is heard in the distance. He starts*] Did you hear that?

MARIE [*smilingly*]. Yes!

GEORGE. What was it?

MARIE. It was the train!

GEORGE. Can you hear it this far?

MARIE. At night you can!

GEORGE [*sinks into chair left of table, back to audience*]. My God! what shall we do now?

MARIE [*softly*]. I will tell you what we will do! We will sit still here — quietly — till the next train — till four o'clock!!!!

[*Throws herself upon* GEORGE, *passionately kissing him*]

GEORGE. *Marie!* My love, my all! [*Kisses her*]

MARIE. Kiss me again! Now, then, do you understand me? I am my own master, and care not for myself —— To-night is St. John's night!!!!!!!

GEORGE. And the fires are burning low ——

MARIE. No, no; let them burn ——

GEORGE. Yes, yes; let them burn — they shall burn!!!!!

[MARIE *disengages herself*]

MARIE. Kiss me no more — let me kiss you — I will take all upon myself — I will take all the consequences; *my mother is a thief, and so am I! George* ——

[*Throws herself into his arms with complete abandon*]

ACT IV

Same setting. Morning. Centre table is decorated with flowers. BRAUER, GEORGE *and* GERTRUDE *are on veranda at rise of curtain. In open door, centre,* MRS. BRAUER. *All listening to quartet, singing, "This is the day of our Lord," by Kreutzer. As curtain rises,* KATIE *enters left, listens also, and dries her eyes. At the end of the serenade,* BRAUER *starts to make an address, and, with* GEORGE *and* GERTRUDE, *leaves the veranda.*

KATIE. Mrs. Brauer, I would like to speak to you a moment.

MRS. BRAUER [*wiping her eyes*]. What is it, Katie?

KATIE [*sniveling*]. Oh, I'm so happy ——

[*Church bells are heard softly in the distance*]

MRS. BRAUER. There go the church bells. Have you put plenty of wine and luncheon in the arbor?

KATIE. Yes, ma'am! Miss Marie and I have prepared a lot!

MRS. BRAUER. What did you want to see me about?

KATIE. I wanted to ask you about the roast; shall we put it in the oven now, and just warm it up for dinner? Miss Marie thinks ——

MRS. BRAUER. Never mind! I'll be down in the kitchen in a moment!

KATIE. And another thing, Mrs. Brauer; won't you please try and get Miss Marie to take a little rest? She has been hard at work since two o'clock this morning, and all day yesterday she was in the city. She can't stand it.

MRS. BRAUER. Oh, on a day like this, we must all put our shoulders to the wheel.

KATIE. Ah, Mrs. Brauer, you and I are old, and not much good for anything but work; but we must spare our young people. Why, at times she almost gives out.

MRS. BRAUER. Well, I will come and see for myself.

KATIE. Thank you!!! Oh, such a day!!! I am so happy ——

[*Exit both left*]

BRAUER [*enters with* GEORGE *and* GERTRUDE]. Thank goodness, that's over. Let me see: first it was the old soldiers, then the Turners, and now the Singing Society —— But do you know, I am so sick of all this wine — give me a brandy.

GERTRUDE [*gets drink from sideboard*]. Yes, papa!

BRAUER [*to* GEORGE]. And what's the matter with you?

GEORGE [*with a sigh*]. Nothing!

BRAUER [*imitating him*]. Nothing!!! I can't quite make you out — Here, have a drink?

GEORGE. No, thank you!

BRAUER. Well, then, don't! Your health, my pet!

GERTRUDE. Drink hearty, papa!

BRAUER [*rises*]. The carriage will arrive here sharply at ten! Understand?

GEORGE. Yes!

BRAUER. And your friend from the city — we will find him at the station?

GEORGE. Yes; he arrives quarter to ten.

BRAUER. For we must have two witnesses. — Do you know what I would like? [*Tapping him on breast*] I would like to be able to look in there.

GERTRUDE. Oh, let him alone, papa! He is now my George. If I am satisfied with him ——

BRAUER. You are right! He who gets my child can laugh — but he also *shall* laugh. Understand? [*Exit right*]

GERTRUDE. Never mind him, George dear. You need not laugh if you don't want to. Not on my account. [*Bells*] Do you hear, George? The church bells, ringing softly, singing, like human voices!!!! That is for you and me!!

GEORGE. Why for us?

GERTRUDE. It is the old pastor's desire; half an hour this morning, and then again this afternoon, when we exchange rings. Do you know, George, mama says a bride's dream the night before her wedding is surely an omen. Do you believe that?

GEORGE [*preoccupied*]. Yes.

GERTRUDE. I dreamed last night of a large, yellow wheat field, in which a poor little rabbit had hidden itself; and high above, in the air, I saw a large hawk. Then it appeared to me that I was the little rabbit, and in fear and dread I called out "George! George!" when suddenly it shot down upon me! — just think ——

GEORGE. And then?

GERTRUDE. Then I awoke. The cold perspiration stood thickly upon my brow —— Oh, George dear, you will protect me? You won't let any one hurt me, will you? For I am only a poor little rabbit, after all ——

GEORGE [*staring before him*]. My God!

GERTRUDE. George, I wanted to ask you something.

GEORGE. Well?

GERTRUDE. You don't love some one else, do you?

GEORGE [*disturbed*]. But, my child ——

GERTRUDE. Well, you know that if a bride cannot laugh on her wedding day, she loves another ——

GEORGE. Why, nonsense ——

GERTRUDE [*unshaken*]. Oh, yes, George; I read it myself. And even if you do, George, I feel so — my love for you is so great, it could move mountains. I love you so dearly —— She will surely learn to forget you, I will love you so much.

GEORGE. But, my pet ——

GERTRUDE. No, no, George. You see, I don't blame you so much. How could I? For what am I, compared to other women? — George, does she love you so very much?

GEORGE. Who?

GERTRUDE. Oh, you know. But don't worry, George dear; she will forget you in time! Don't you remember Robert, our neighbor's son? He threatened to kill himself if I didn't marry him, and he has already forgotten me! And to-day, when we stand at the altar, at the Doxology and the exchange of rings, I will nudge you softly, and then we will both pray to our good Father in heaven to make it easy for her; for no one shall be unhappy on this day! Why, George, you are crying!!!!

GEORGE. Crying — I?

GERTRUDE. Why, yes! Here are two large tears running down your cheek. [*Wipes his eyes with her handkerchief*] So there ——

GEORGE. Tell me, my pet; and if we should be parted, after all?

GERTRUDE. How could that be possible?

GEORGE. If I should die — or ——

GERTRUDE [*embracing him*]. No, no! Don't say that! Don't say that!!!

[MARIE *appears in door, seeing embrace*]

GEORGE [*startled*]. Some one is here ——

GERTRUDE. It is only Marie.

MARIE [*pointedly*]. You seem to be particularly affectionate to-day.

GERTRUDE [*miffed*]. We always love each other. Oh, perhaps that doesn't please you ——

MARIE. It is nothing to me!

GERTRUDE [*half jesting*]. Besides, what do you want here? Isn't there anything to do in the kitchen?

MARIE [*stung, but controlling herself*]. Mama has sent me ——

GERTRUDE. Yes, yes, dear; you are just in time to dress my hair. Have you hairpins?

MARIE [*shaking her head*]. I will get some. [*Reels*]

GERTRUDE [*affectionately*]. What's the matter, dear? Oh, you must be tired!

MARIE. I am not tired.

GERTRUDE. Yes, yes, you are. Now you sit down here. I will fetch them myself. [*Quick exit*]

MARIE [*full of fear*]. Gertrude!!!

GEORGE. I must speak with you!

MARIE. Speak; I am listening.

GEORGE. Why this tone? Does it perhaps mean that between us all is over?

MARIE. If it is or is not, it matters little.

GEORGE. Am I, then, to understand ——

MARIE. My God! Have you not Gertrude? But now I saw her in your arms! What do you want with me?

GEORGE. I must speak with you ——

MARIE. Not now ——

GERTRUDE [*re-enters*]. Here are the hairpins. [MARIE *takes them*] I have also brought my dressing-sacque and combs. Now we will excuse you for a little while, George dear. You can give your judgment later.

GEORGE [*with a glance at* MARIE]. May I not remain?

GERTRUDE. No, no. You would criticise and find fault, and embarrass Marie, and me, too. Now be good, George, and go into the garden. [GEORGE *exits*]

MARIE [*holding sacque*]. Will you put this on?

GERTRUDE. No, I will put it around me.

MARIE. As you please. How do you want your hair dressed, high or low?

GERTRUDE. But Marie, we had decided upon that! Have you forgotten?

MARIE. Oh, pardon me — I — of course we had!

GERTRUDE. Then give me a kiss!

[MARIE *suddenly takes her head in both hands and stares at her*]

GERTRUDE [*frightened*]. Why do you look at me so strangely?

MARIE [*embraces her fiercely*]. My darling!!!!

GERTRUDE. Oh, you hurt me!

MARIE. Perhaps you hurt me, too——

GERTRUDE. I? How so?

MARIE [*has begun to comb*]. How can you ask? You are about to be married — and — and —I — I am jealous of you!

GERTRUDE. Just wait, Marie, dear. [*Sings*]

"In a year, in a year, when the nightingale comes ——"

MARIE [*intensely*]. When the nightingale comes?

GERTRUDE. You will be Pastor's wife. [*Laughs*]

[MARIE, *with one braid in her hand, bending back, laughing loudly and forced*]

GERTRUDE [*in pain*]. Oh, you are pulling my hair ——

MARIE. Any one as happy as you should be able to bear a little pain. There! I will braid it into your hair — for you are happy, are you not? Very happy?

GERTRUDE. Yes! I am — that is — I would like to be — but George — he is so sad.

MARIE. *George?*

GERTRUDE. Yes!

MARIE [*lurkingly*]. Perhaps you were right! Perhaps he *does* love another!

GERTRUDE [*softly groaning*]. Oh, why did you say that?

MARIE. Because —— No, no — how could he? That was wicked in me, wasn't it? How could he think of another, when he looks at you?

GERTRUDE. No, no, Marie, you are right! I told him so myself!

MARIE [*slowly and marked*]. And what did he say?

GERTRUDE. He? — He said nothing! And then — he cried ——

MARIE [*triumphantly*]. He cried? George cried? Have you ever seen him do that before?

GERTRUDE. No, never!

MARIE [*to herself*]. He cried ——

GERTRUDE. And then he said: "What if we should be parted, after all?"

MARIE. If who should be parted — you and he?

GERTRUDE. Yes — if he should die——

MARIE. If he — oh, that is what he meant! Oh, well, he just wanted to say something. [*With forced lightness*]

GERTRUDE. Of course he did. But what about the other woman? Oh, I didn't let him see that I cared — and for the time I didn't care, really; but now, when I think of it! My God! — if it were really so! If I only knew!!!!!!!

MARIE. Of course, he would not tell you!

GERTRUDE. Do you think he would tell any one else?

MARIE. Yes, sooner than tell you.

GERTRUDE. Yes! I suppose so!

MARIE. Shall I ask him?

GERTRUDE. Oh, if you would do that for me ——

MARIE. There now, it is done. Here is the comb and the rest of the hairpins. Now go!

GERTRUDE. And do you really think he would tell you?

MARIE. I am sure he will.

GERTRUDE. Oh, Marie, how grateful I shall be to you ——

MARIE [*pushes her out of the door*]. Go now, go! [*Stretches herself*] Ah — ah — ah —— [*Calls softly*] George! [*There is a knock at the door*] Come in!

PAUL [*enters*]. Pardon me, Miss Marie; is Mr. Brauer in?

MARIE. No, Mr. Paul!

PAUL. The assistant pastor would like to speak to him — but here he is himself.

PASTOR [*enters*]. Good morning, Miss Marie!

MARIE [*offers her hand hesitatingly*]. Good morning!

PASTOR. I will wait here, Mr. Paul!

PAUL. Then, Miss Marie, will you please give me the key to the cellar? I want to put the beer on the ice.

MARIE [*gets key from keyboard*]. Here it is.

PAUL. Thank you! [*Exit*]

[*Pause*]

PASTOR. And have you nothing to say to me?

MARIE. What shall I say, Pastor?

PASTOR. Are you not happy this day?

MARIE [*hard*]. No!

PASTOR. Not even on account of our betrothal?

MARIE. We will have no betrothal, Pastor!

PASTOR. What are you saying?

MARIE. I shall leave this place ——

PASTOR. *You* ——

MARIE. To-day, I leave this house!

PASTOR. Pardon me, if I have forced my attentions upon you ——

MARIE. No! You have not!

PASTOR. My attentions were honorable, I assure you ——

MARIE. Thank you, Pastor, I know that; but ——

PASTOR. Then it is not on my account you are leaving?

MARIE. Certainly not!

PASTOR. Does any one here know of your intention?

MARIE. No one!

PASTOR. Miss Marie, I am still a young man; if I should mention such a word as "life's happiness," it would, perhaps, sound absurd. Therefore, I will not speak of myself. My fate is in my own hands. But if you realize this moment what you owe to this house — and I say this not for mine, nor for their sake, I say it for yours and yours alone; though I am but a poor mortal — it pains me — but be that as it may — Marie, if you cause a discord in this house, the blame will rest upon yourself.

MARIE. Perhaps!

PASTOR. Pardon me — I will not question you. I wish to know nothing; that, in the end, is always the best. Did I not love you as well as myself, I would not speak another word; but as matters stand now, I will say one — aye, one more word — I would not have dared to say otherwise. The greatest, the highest thing one possesses in this world is his life's *melody* — a certain strain that ever vibrates, that his soul forever sings — waking or dreaming, loudly or softly, internally or externally. Others may say: "His temperament or his character is so, or so." He only smiles, for he knows his melody and he knows it alone. You see, Miss Marie, my life's happiness you have destroyed, but my life's melody you cannot take from me. That is pure and will always remain so. And now I say to you, Miss Marie, if you fill this house, where you have obtained everything you possess — honor, bread, and love — if you fill this house with sorrow — if you dare to sin against your father and your mother ——

MARIE. One moment, Pastor. My father and my mother — what do you know about them? My father I don't know myself, but my mother? Ah, yes, I know her well; and from her I have inherited my life's melody. This melody has a beautiful text. Do you want to know what it is, Pastor? It is, "*Thou shalt steal.* Steal everything for thyself — thy life's happiness — thy love — all — all. Only others will enjoy it in the end." Yes, Pastor, my mother is a thief. On St. John's eve she came stealthily over yonder garden hedge; and as my mother, so am I! And now, Pastor, ask me no more; I need all my senses, for to-day my entire happiness is at stake! There — now you know all!

PASTOR. Yes, now I know! Farewell, Miss Marie. I will forget this day, perhaps; *you* — never —— [*Exit*]

GERTRUDE [*enters door left*]. Was that George who just now left?

MARIE. Were you at that door, listening?

GERTRUDE. *Marie!* — For shame!!!!!

MARIE. Now go and dress yourself; I will call George. Go now, go!

GERTRUDE. And will you come and tell me at once?

MARIE. At once! Yes!! [GERTRUDE *exits.* MARIE *calling softly*] George! George!

GEORGE [*enters from veranda*]. Are you alone?

[MARIE *nods*].

GEORGE. Have you arranged it so?

MARIE. You wished to speak to me, so I have arranged it!

GEORGE. Marie, I wished to tell you. One hour more I am a free man — and my mind is made up. It is yet time to change our fates. What will you answer me?

MARIE. Answer you? Why, I don't know what you want.

GEORGE. You know it well enough. I want *you!* Do you hear me? *You*, who belong to me for life — I want you!

MARIE [*softly — happily*]. I thought the fires were out — and you had forgotten me — and now you want me?

GEORGE [*softly*]. Are you not mine? Are you not my wife in the eyes of heaven?

MARIE. Yes, but in the eyes of the world it is *Gertrude!*

GEORGE. Must it, then, be so?

MARIE [*doubtingly*]. Go — go — you love her ——

GEORGE. Yes, I do love her. How could I help that? Do you not also love her?

MARIE [*bitterly*]. Ah, I don't know. A few moments ago, when I saw her in your arms — and you wept, too — only, because you love her!! Oh, but I can bear it!! I will bear it like — like — ah! —— But there — that is no one's affair but mine ——

GEORGE. So, so, that is no one's affair but yours, eh? You might have invented a sweeter torture. I meant to remain an honorable man all my life; if unable — well, there are plenty of bullets left.

MARIE. And do you wish to die?

GEORGE. I do not want to, — I must!

MARIE. *George*, then take me with you? [*He shakes his head*] For years I have carried the wish in my heart — to kill you! Then I would kiss and love you like mad — and then follow you into eternity ——

GEORGE. Nonsense, girl, nonsense! Can't you see how one turns round and round and round in a circle, till at last to find no other escape than death?

MARIE. I am not afraid to die; though with you I'd rather live ——

GEORGE. To live, dear, will require more courage for both of us.

MARIE. How so?

GEORGE. Can you ask? Here in this house, to which we owe everything — both you and I? Where they gave us food, shelter and love? After all that, would you have the courage to destroy their happiness?

MARIE. The good old pastor used to say: "You must have the courage to do everything, except to do wrong." I would even have the courage to do wrong.

GEORGE. Shall I put you to the test?

MARIE. If you will give me your hand now and say to me: "Come, we will run away, through yonder garden gate — just as we are — now, this very moment" — you shall see how I will run!

GEORGE. What? — Secretly — without telling any one? Is that what you mean?

MARIE. Don't you?

GEORGE [*laughs bitterly*]. No, no!

MARIE. Well, what then?

GEORGE. Face to face, like a man. There he stands — I here. If he will give me back my word, 'tis well. If he refuses [*determined*], 'tis also well.

MARIE. My God! You know his temper! He will kill us — he will kill us both!

GEORGE. 'Tis death either way ——

MARIE. George — think ——

GEORGE. Oh, I have thought of it for two days and two nights. One is madness and the other insanity. There is no other way. [*Pained*] Only the thought of the child gives me pain ——

MARIE. Of course, if your feelings for Gertrude ——

GEORGE. Then it is your desire? [*She nods assent*] Very well! So be it! But remember, it is a question of life and death! — And, therefore, you yourself must be present.

MARIE [*in terror*]. I? — I be present when you ask him?

GEORGE. What? — You, who wish to become my helpmate and partner in life, and share all my life's troubles — you would desert me now — desert me in this hour? — and I very much fear, not the worst in store for us?

MARIE. No, no, George; it's not that — not that! But you know how we have feared him and have trembled for years — and now I should ——

GEORGE. If you can't even do that ——

MARIE. If necessary — yes! — I will do it.

GEORGE. Then — as soon as he returns. [BRAUER *is heard breathing heavily*] Ah, here he is!

BRAUER [*enters*]. Why, that is almost an old-time Biblical miracle. Just think, children, think of it —— But where is Gertrude? Well? Can't you speak?

MARIE [*trembling*]. I think she is dressing!

BRAUER. Well, it will interest you also, so listen: I met the assistant pastor as he came from the house here, and he told me, rather piqued, that our good old pastor had suddenly risen from his bed and limpingly insisted upon delivering the wedding discourse himself. Well — what's the matter? Aren't you glad?

GEORGE. H'm ——

BRAUER. Of course, you are a perfect heathen! But I say, our assistant pastor must have been terribly put out. He had been preparing for that same address for days. He looked rather crestfallen; but then, there is no help for it.

GEORGE. Pardon me, uncle; in order to save time, I must ask you for an interview.

BRAUER. What, again? Can't you wait till afternoon?

GEORGE. No! Before the ceremony, if you please.

BRAUER [*startled*]. Wha — oh, I see. I suppose now you will demand more than I am willing to give? Marie, leave us —— [PAUL *enters*] Well, what now?

[PAUL *gives him a sign*]

BRAUER. There, look at him! Well, have you lost your tongue, man? Why don't you speak?

PAUL. No, no, Mr. Brauer, I have something to say to you — alone.

BRAUER. Then why don't you come nearer?

PAUL [*whispering*]. We have just now caught the old woman.

BRAUER [*with a glance* at MARIE]. What? Marie, you may remain and chat with George for awhile; he is a very interesting young man. [*Softly, to* PAUL] Where?

PAUL. Down in the cellar; just as I wanted to put the beer on the ice, I found her there in a dark corner, loaded down with plunder!

BRAUER. Is she there now?

PAUL. Yes, struggling like a demon.

BRAUER. Undoubtedly this offense will earn her a good long term in prison and we will be rid of her for a long time! But how to get her out of the house?

PAUL. Leave that to me, Mr. Brauer; I know a way to keep her quiet.

BRAUER. Yes, yes, and in the meantime I will make out the papers and we will hand her over to the gendarme; that will be the best. Children, I will be busy for a moment! Wait here until I return.

GEORGE. Don't forget, uncle!

BRAUER. No, no. I'll be back in a moment. Come, Mr. Paul!

[*Both exit*]

GEORGE. You are trembling ——

MARIE. Am I?

GEORGE. Marie dear, I am with you. No one shall harm you!

MARIE. Oh, it is not that.

GEORGE. What, then?

MARIE. Oh, I don't know. It has suddenly come over me so —— [*Starts*] Sh! He's coming!

[*Noise. Scuffling of feet and smothered cries are heard*]

GEORGE. What is it?

MARIE. In God's name, be still!

GYPSY [*calling for help*]. Mine daughter! Mine Mamie! My Mamie!!

MARIE. Hear? Hear? *My mother! They are taking her away — to prison! Sh! Be still! No, no; don't open the door! Be quiet! Be quiet!*

GYPSY [*not as loud as before*]. Oh, mine daughter! My Mamie — my Mamie ——! [*Dying out*]

GEORGE. Will you not go out to her, no matter what she has done?

MARIE. How can I? How can I? I am afraid — afraid ——

GEORGE. Then shall I go?

MARIE [*frightened*]. No, no; don't leave me! Sh! Be quiet! So, quiet! Now they have gone! Thank heaven! [*Again wailing, but very distant*] Hear? Hear? Let her shriek! Let her call! I cannot help her! I am a thief, the same as she. I, too, have come to this house, and I have stolen. But oh, my God, what have I stolen? What have I stolen?

GEORGE. Come, Marie, control yourself! Think of what we have before us!

MARIE. Yes, yes — I'll be quiet! What have we before us? No, no; I will not — I cannot — I ——

GEORGE. Do you mean to ——

BRAUER [*in door*]. Did you hear anything, children? Any noise?

GEORGE. We heard screams and a scuffle. What was the matter?

BRAUER. Oh, nothing of any consequence. Don't mind it. An old vagabond of a woman, that's all. I have only to sign the papers now, then I'll be back. [*Exit*]

GEORGE. *Marie!*

MARIE. Hush, not a word, not a word! She out there must go her way, and I must go mine!

GEORGE. What do you mean?

MARIE. You said it yourself. 'Tis madness! Yes, yes; 'tis madness! *All — all!* What we do — what we desire — all — all!

GEORGE. Marie!

MARIE. Or do you imagine for one moment we could be happy together? No, I know you too well. I know the certain result. You would never forgive yourself nor me, and in the end life would become a burden to me, if only because I was in your way. Yes, yes, that would be the end of it all ——

GEORGE. *Marie,* I will be faithful to you forever, let come what may, be it good or bad; you know that!

MARIE. Yes, thank God! — yes!

GEORGE. If there was only the slightest possibility of a chance to escape from all this whirl — then we

might be free, we might —— But no matter what we begin, we cannot shake off nor disregard our obligations to this house; never, as long as we live!

MARIE. Therefore, what more can you desire? Everything on earth we possess, all that was beautiful, all the love, all — all, we gave to each other. There is nothing more to give, for either one of us. St. John's night is past, the fires are out, are dead ——

GEORGE. And what shall become of us?

MARIE. Of you? That I can't tell. Perhaps you will be happy, perhaps not; that must all rest with yourself. And I? Oh, be content. I will take care of myself. As soon as possible I shall leave this house. Not to-day, as I would like — it might create suspicion ——

GEORGE. And where will you go?

MARIE. Ah, the world is large. I shall go far, far away, where no one will ever find me. No, no, not even you, George.

GEORGE. And if you should go to ruin out there?

MARIE. Do not fear. I am the calamity child, the foundling. My hands are hard and callous — see, see! Just like my heart is, now. I will work and work, and toil, until I fall exhausted — then I will sleep and rest, until it is time for work again; and thus I will perhaps maintain a miserable existence.

GEORGE. You say you are a calamity child! Well, so am I. But our accounts do not harmonize. You are going out into the world and misery, and it was I who drove you to it. Even did I not love you as I do, that thought would follow me forever and embitter my entire life. But, be it so. We are both children of misery! Therefore let us grit our teeth, shake each other by the hand — and say farewell!

MARIE [*softly*]. Good-by, Georgie dear — and — don't be afraid — he is not yet coming — and forgive me — do you hear? From to-day — you understand? Did I not love you as much as I do, this would not have been quite so hard; but there — there — 'tis all right now — I know; I can never be entirely poor now; for once, at least, the fires of St. John have burned for me — once — just once ——

GEORGE. Marie ——

MARIE [*glancing around*]. Don't — don't ——

MRS. BRAUER [*enters, followed by* GERTRUDE]. Hasn't the carriage arrived yet, children? And where is papa? It is time to go.

MARIE. He is coming now, I believe.

BRAUER [*enters*]. So there, I am ready to go! But, that is, you wanted to speak to me first?

GEORGE [*with a glance at* MARIE]. It is all settled now, thank you.

BRAUER. Then come, wife, my coat, quick!

[*She helps him with frock, after he has divested himself of jacket*]

GERTRUDE [*aside to* MARIE]. Did you ask him?

[MARIE *nods*].

GERTRUDE. And what did he say?

MARIE. It was all nonsense, my pet. He loves you and only you. He never has loved any one else — he says — and he will be very happy — so he says ——

GERTRUDE [*embraces him joyfully*]. My darling George ——

BRAUER. Come, come, my child — time enough for that after the ceremony. Come!

[*All follow him to the door. When* GEORGE *reaches door he turns, and, as he takes one parting glance at* MARIE, BRAUER *pushes him off.* MARIE *stands motionless, looking after them, handkerchief in mouth, nervously forcing it between her teeth*]

THE END

THE SUNKEN BELL

A FAIRY PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

By GERHART HAUPTMANN

FREELY RENDERED INTO ENGLISH VERSE
BY CHARLES HENRY MELTZER

"Open the windows — Light and God stream in."

CHARACTERS

HEINRICH, *a bell-founder*
MAGDA, *his wife*
TWO CHILDREN, *boys, aged five and nine*
THE VICAR
THE SCHOOLMASTER
THE BARBER
OLD WITTIKIN
RAUTENDELEIN, *an elfin creature*
THE NICKELMANN, *an elemental spirit*
THE WOOD-SPRITE
FOUR ELVES
TROLDS AND DWARFS
VILLAGERS

The scenes are laid in the mountains and in a village below.

This play is published with the written approval of GERHART HAUPTMANN, and by arrangement with the holder of the English copyright, and is fully protected by the copyright law, all requirements of which have been complied with. In its present form it is dedicated to the reading public only, and no performances of it may be given, except by special arrangement with the owner of the acting rights, who may be addressed in care of Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York.

COPYRIGHT, 1899,
BY ROBERT HOWARD RUSSELL

COPYRIGHT, 1899, 1914,
BY DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & CO.

THE SUNKEN BELL

ACT I

SCENE: *A fir-clad glade in the mountains. Right, up stage, beneath an overhanging rock, a hut, with practicable door and windows. At left centre an old well.*

RAUTENDELEIN *is seated on the edge of the well, combing her thick golden locks and addressing a bee which she is trying to drive away. In one hand she has a mirror.*

RAUTENDELEIN. Thou buzzing, golden, wight — whence com'st thou here?
Thou sipper of sweets, thou little wax-maker!
Nay! Tease me not, thou sun-born good-for-naught!
Dost hear? . . . Begone! . . . 'Tis time I combed my hair
With Granny's golden comb. Should I delay,
She'll scold me when she comes. Be-gone, I say!
What? . . . Loit'ring still? . . . Away — away with thee!
Am I a rose bush? . . . Are my lips a rose?
Off to the wood with thee, beyond the brook!
There, there, my pretty bee, bloom cow-slips fair,
And crocuses, and violets — thou canst suck
Thy fill of them. Dost think I jest? No. No.
Quick! Get thee home. Thou'rt not in favor here.
Thou knowest Granny's cast a spell on thee
For furnishing the Church with altar-lights.
Come! Must I speak again? Go not too far!
Hey! . . . Chimney! Puff some smoke across the glade,
To drive away this naughty, wilful bee.
Ho! Gander! Hither! Hither! . . . Hurry! Hurry!
Away! Away! [*Bee flies off*] . . . At last! . . .

[RAUTENDELEIN *combs her hair quietly for a moment or two. Then, leaning over the well, she calls down*] Hey! Nickel-mann! [*Pause*]
He does not hear me. Well — I'll sing to myself.

Where do I come from? . . . Whither go?
Tell me — I long to know!
Did I grow as the birds of the wood-land gay?
Am I a fay?
Who asks the sweet flower
That blooms in the dell,
And brightens the bower,
Its tale to tell?
Yet, oft, as I sit by my well, alone,
I sigh for the mother I ne'er have known.
But my weird I must dree —
And I'm fair to see —
A golden-haired maid of the forest free!

[*Pause. She calls*]
Hey! Nickelmann! Come up! 'Tis lonely here.
Granny's gone gathering fir-apples. I'm dull! . . .
Wilt keep me company and tell me tales?
Why then, to-night, perhaps, as a re-ward . . .
I'll creep into some farmer's yard and steal
A big, black, cock for thee! . . . Ah, here he comes;
The silver bubbles to the surface mount!
If he should bob up now, the glass he'd break,
That such bright answer to my nod doth make.

[*Admiring her reflection in the well*]
Godden' to thee, my sweet maid o' the well!
Thy name? . . . Rautendelein? . . . Indeed! I see —
Thou'rt jealous of my beauty. Look at me.
For I, not thou, Rautendelein should be.
What didst thou answer? Didst thou dare to point
Thy finger at thy soft twin-breasts? . . . Nay, nay —
I'm fairer; fair as Freya. Not for naught
My hair was spun out of the sunbeams red,
To shine, in golden glory, even as the sun
Shines up at us, at noon, from out a lake.
Aha! Thou spread'st thy tresses, like a net,
All fiery-scarlet, set to catch the fishes!
Thou poor, vain, foolish, trull. . . . There! Catch this stone.
[*Throwing pebble down the well and disturbing the reflection*]
Thy hour is ended. Now — I'm fair alone!
[*Calling*]
Ho! Nickelmann! Come — help me pass the time!
[*The* NICKELMANN, *a water-spirit, half emerges from the well, and flops over the edge. He is streaming with water. Weeds cling to his head. He snorts like a seal, and his eyes blink as if the daylight hurt them*]
He's here! . . . Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! How dreadfully plain
He is! . . . Didst thou not hear me call! Dear, dear —
It makes one's flesh creep but to know him near!
THE NICKELMANN [*croaking*]. Brekekekex!
RAUTENDELEIN [*mocking*]. Brekekekex! Ay, ay —
It smells of springtide. Well, is that so strange?
Why — every lizard, mole, and worm, and mouse —
The veriest water-rat — had scented that.
The quail, the hare, the trout, the fly, the weeds,
Had told thee Spring was here.
THE NICKELMANN [*touchily*]. Brekekekex!
Be not too nosey-wise. Dost understand?
Thou ape, thou midge, thou tomtit irk me not!
I say, beware! . . . So, Quorax Quack! Quack! Quack!
RAUTENDELEIN. If Master Uncle's cross to-day,
I'll leave him all alone to play.
And I'll go dance a ring-a-round.
Partners a-plenty, I'll be bound,
For pretty maidens may be found.
[*Calling*
Heigh-a-aye!
VOICE OF WOOD-SPRITE [*heard without*]. Heigh-a-o!
RAUTENDELEIN. My merry faun come — dance with me, I pray!
[*Enter the* WOOD-SPRITE, *skipping comically across the glade*]
THE WOOD-SPRITE. Nay, I'm no dancer; but I know a leap
Would make the mountain-goat with envy weep.
If that won't do for thee, I know a game
Will please thee more, my nixey. Fly with me;
I'll show thee in the woods a willow tree
All hollowed out with age, where never came
The sound of babbling brook, nor crow of cock.
There, in the shadow of some friendly rock,
I'll cut for thee, my own, the wond'rous pipe
All maids must dance to.
RAUTENDELEIN [*eluding him*]. Thanks I'm not yet ripe
For such as thou! An thou must play thy pranks,
Go — woo thy wood-wench. She may like thy shanks!
Or — go to thy dear partner, who — they say —
Another baby bears thee every day;
Except on Sundays, when, at early morn,
Three dirty little brats to thee are born
Ha! Ha! Ha!
[*She runs off into the hut, laughing. The* WOOD-SPRITE *vainly pursues her and returns disconsolate*]
THE NICKELMANN. Brekekekex How mad the baggage seems!
The lightning blast thee!
THE WOOD-SPRITE [*sitting*]. Ay! . . I'd love to tame her.
[*He produces a short pipe and lights it by striking a match on his hoof*]

THE NICKELMANN. And how go things at home?
THE WOOD-SPRITE. So so. So so. It's warmer here than on the hills. You're snug.
Up yonder the wind shrieks and howls all day;
The swollen clouds drift damp about the peaks,
And burst at last, like sponges, when they're squeezed.
A foul time we have of it!
THE NICKELMANN. And is that all?
THE WOOD-SPRITE. No . . . Yesterday I cut
My first spring salad. It grew near my hut.
This morning, early, I went out,
And, roaming carelessly about,
Through brush and brier,
Then climbing higher,
At last I reached the topmost wood.
There I espied a hateful brood
Of mortals, who did sweat and stew,
And dig the earth, and marble hew.
A curse upon their church and creed —
Their chapels, and their clanging bells [1] —
THE NICKELMANN. Their bread they mix with cummin-seed! [2]
THE WOOD-SPRITE. They plague us in our woods and wells.
But vain is all our wrath and woe.
Beside the deep abyss 'twill grow
With tower and spire, and, overhead,
The cross that you and I do dread.
Ay! . . . The noisy monster was all but hung
In the lofty steeple, and soon had rung.
But I was alert! We shall never hear
That bell! It is drownèd in the mere!
[*Changing tone*]
By cock and pie!
A devil of a joke! . . . I stood on the brink
Of the cliff, chewing sorrel, to help me think,
As I rested against a stump of birch,
'Mid the mountain grasses, I watched the church.
When, all of a sudden, I saw the wing
Of a blood-red butterfly, trying to cling
To a stone. And I marked how it dipped, and tipped,
As if from a blossom the sweet it sipped.
I called. It fluttered, to left and to right,
Until on my hand I felt it light.
I knew the elf. It was faint with fright.
We babbled o' this,
And we babbled o' that,
Of the frogs that had spawned
Ere the day had dawned, —
We babbled and gabbled, a-much, I wis:
Then it broke
Into tears! . . .
I calmed its fears.
And again it spoke.
"Oh, they're cracking their whips,
"And they gee! and they whoa!
"As they drag it aloft
"From the dale below.
"'Tis some terrible tub, that has lost its lid,
"All of iron! Will nobody rid
"Our woods of the horrible thing? 'Twould make
"The bravest moss-mannikin shudder and quake.
"They swear they will hang it, these foolish people,
"High up in the heart of the new church steeple,
"And they'll hammer, and bang, at its sides all day
"To frighten good spirits of earth away!"

I hummed, and I hawed, and I said, ho ho!
As the butterfly fell to the earth: while I
Stole off in pursuit of a herd near by.
I guzzled my fill of good milk, I trow!
Three udders ran dry. They will seek in vain
So much as a drop of it more to drain.
Then, making my way to a swirling stream,
I hid in the brush, as a sturdy team
Came snorting, and panting, along the road —
Eight nags, tugging hard at their heavy load.
We will bide our time, quoth I — and lay
Quite still in the grass, till the mighty dray
Rumbled by: — when, stealing from hedge to hedge,
And hopping and skipping from rock to rock,
I followed the fools. They had reached the edge
Of the cliff when there came — a block!
With flanks all a-quiver, and hocks a-thrill,
They hauled and they lugged at the dray until,

[1] The sprites and dwarfs hated bells, especially church bells, as disturbers of their ancient privacy.
[2] Cummin-seed was obnoxious to the sprites.

Worn out by the struggle to move the bell,
They had to lie down for a moment. Well —
Quoth I to myself, the Faun will play
Them a trick that will spare them more work to-day.
One clutch at the wheel — I had loosened a spoke —
A wrench, and a blow, and the woodwork broke.
A wobble, a crack, and the hateful bell
Rolled over — and into the gulf it fell!
And oh, how it sounded,
And clanged, as it bounded,
From crag to crag, on its downward way:
Till at last in the welcoming splash and the spray
Of the lake it was lost — for aye!

[*During the* WOOD-SPRITE'S *speech night has drawn near. It is now dusk. Several times, towards the end of the narrative, faint cries for help have been heard, coming from the wood. Enter from back,* HEINRICH. *As he approaches the hut, the* WOOD-SPRITE *vanishes in the wood and the* NICKELMANN *disappears in the well.* HEINRICH *is about thirty years of age. His face is pale and careworn*]

HEINRICH. Good people — open! Quick! I've lost my way!
Help! Help! I've fallen! . . . I am weak . . . I faint!
Will no one answer? . . . Help! Kind people! Help!

[*He sinks on the ground, unconscious, near the hut. The sun has set — dark purple clouds hang over the hills. The wind rises. Enter from the wood, carrying a basket on her back,* OLD WITTIKIN]

WITTIKIN. Rautendel'! Come and help me with my load!
I've too much on my shoulders. Come, I say!
I'm scant o' breath! . . . Where can the girl be dawdling?

[*A bat flies across the glade*]

Ho! Stop thy gadding, flitter-mouse, and list!
Thou'lt fill thy greedy craw quite soon enough.
Come hither. Fly through yonder hole and see
If she's within. Then send her quick to me!

[*Faint lightning.* WITTIKIN *shakes her fist at the sky*]

Ay, ay, I see thee, Father Thor! . . . 'Twill storm!
But give thy noisy goats not too much rope,
And see thy great red beard gleams not too bright.
Rautendel'! Hey! Rautendel' . . . Dost not hear?

[*A squirrel skips across the path*]

Hey! Squirrel! Thou hast fleet and nimble feet.
Hop thou into the hut, and, shouldst thou meet
Rautendel', send her hither. As a treat,
I'll give thee, for thy pains, a nut to eat!

[WITTIKIN *sees* HEINRICH *and touches him contemptuously with her foot*]

What's this? A stranger? Well, well, I declare!
And pray, what brings you here, my man, so late?
Rautendel'! . . . Hey! Rautendel'! [*To* HEINRICH] Are you dead?
Plague take you! As if I'd not more'n enough
To worry me — what wi' the Bailiff and the Priest
Hunting me down like a mad dog. And now
I find a dead man at my door — Rautendel'!
A rare time I'd have of it, I'll be bound
If they should find this fellow lying here
They'd burn my house about my ears
[*To* HEINRICH] Art dumb?
Ay. Ay.

[RAUTENDELEIN *enters from hut and looks out inquiringly*]

Oho! Thou'rt come at last. Look there!
We have a visitor. And what a one!
He's still enough. Go! Fetch a truss of hay,
And make a litter.

RAUTENDELEIN. In the hut?

WITTIKIN [*grumbling*]. What next
Nay, nay. We've no room in the hut for him.

[*Exit into hut.* RAUTENDELEIN *follows her. She reappears a moment later, with an armful of hay, and is about to kneel beside* HEINRICH, *when he recovers consciousness*]

HEINRICH. Where am I? Maiden — wilt thou answer me?

RAUTENDELEIN. Why, in the mountains.
HEINRICH. In the mountains? Ay — But how . . . and why? What brought me here to-night?
RAUTENDELEIN. Nay, gentle stranger, naught know I of that.
Why fret thyself about such trifles? See —
Here I have brought thee hay. So lay thy head
Down and take all the rest thou need'st.
HEINRICH. Yes! Yes!
'Tis rest I need. Indeed — indeed — thou'rt right.
But rest will come to me no more, my child!
[*Uneasily*]
Now . . . tell me . . . what has happened?
RAUTENDELEIN. Nay, if I knew . . .
HEINRICH. Meseems . . . methinks . . . and . . . then . . . all ends in dreams.
Ay, surely, I am dreaming.
RAUTENDELEIN. Here is milk.
Thou must drink some of it, for thou art weak.
HEINRICH [*eagerly*]. Thanks, maiden. I will drink. Give me the milk.
[*He drinks from a bowl which she offers him*]
RAUTENDELEIN [*while he drinks*]. Thou art not used to mountain ways. Thy home
Lies in the vale below, where mortals dwell.
And, like a hunter who once fell from the cliff
While giving chase to some wild mountain fowl,
Thou hast climbed far too high. And yet . . . that man
Was not quite fashioned as the man thou art.
HEINRICH [*after drinking and looking ecstatically and fixedly at* RAUTENDELEIN]. Speak on! Speak on! Thy drink was very sweet.
But sweeter still thy voice . . .
[*Again becoming anxious*]
She said — a man
Not fashioned like myself. A better man —
And yet he fell! . . . Speak on, my child.
RAUTENDELEIN. Why speak?
What can my words avail? I'll rather go
And fetch thee water from the brook, to wash
The blood and dust from off thy brow . . .
HEINRICH [*pleading and grasping her by the wrist.* RAUTENDELEIN *stands undecided*].
Ah, stay!
And look into mine eyes with thy strange eyes.
For lo, the world, within thine eyes renewed,
So sweetly bedded, draws me back to life!
Stay, child. Oh, stay!
RAUTENDELEIN [*uneasy*]. Then . . . as thou wilt. And yet . . .
HEINRICH [*fevered and imploring*]. Ah, stay with me! Thou wilt not leave me so?
Thou dost not dream how dear to me thou art.
Oh, wake me not, my child. I'll tell thee all.
I fell. . . . Yet — no. Speak thou; for thy dear voice
Has Heaven's own music. God did give it thee.
And I will listen. Speak! . . . Wilt thou not speak?
Wilt thou not sing to me? Why then . . . I must . . .
I fell. I know not how — I've told thee that —
Whether the path gave way beneath my feet;
Whether 'twas willingly I fell, or no —
God wot. Enough. I fell into the gulf.
[*More fevered*]
And then I clutched at a wild cherry tree
That grew between the rocks. It broke — and I,
Still clasping a bough tightly, felt a shower
Of pale pink blossoms riot round my head;
Then swift was hurled to the abyss — and died!
And even now I'm dead. It must be so.
Let no one wake me!
RAUTENDELEIN [*uncertainly*]. Yet thou seem'st alive!
HEINRICH. I know — I know — what once I did not know:
That Life is Death, and only Death is Life.
[*Collapsing again*]
I fell. I lived — and fell. The bell fell, too!
We two — the bell and I. Was I the first —
To slip, and next — the bell? Or — the reverse?

Who seeks to know? And who could prove the truth?
And even were it proven, what care I?
Then I was living. Now — ah, now . . . I'm dead.
[*Tenderly*]
Ah, go not yet!
[*Looks at his hand*]
My hand! . . . 'Tis white as milk!
My hand! . . . It hangs so heavy! . . . It seems dead.
I cannot lift it! . . . Yet — How sweet thou art!
The mere touch of thy soft hair doth bring relief,
As water of Bethesda! . . . Nay, do not fear!
My hand shall never harm thee — thou art holy!
Where have we met? . . . I surely know thy face.
Somewhere, but where, or when, I cannot tell,
I wrought for thee, and strove — in one grand Bell,
To wed the silver music of thy voice
With the warm gold of a Sun-holiday.
It should have been a master-work! . . . I failed.
Then wept I tears of blood.
RAUTENDELEIN. Wept tears of blood?
I cannot follow thee. What be these tears?
HEINRICH [*trying to raise his head*].
Thou lovely picture! . . . Help me to sit up.
[RAUTENDELEIN *stoops and supports his head*]
Dost thou bend down to me? Then, with love's arms,
Do thou release me from this cruel Earth,
Whereunto the hour nails me, as to a cross.
Release me! For thou canst. I know thou canst!
And, with thy tender hands, pluck off the thorns
That crown my head. No crown! Love — only Love!
[*His head is slightly raised. He seems exhausted*]
Thanks! Thanks!
[*Gently and in a lost kind of way as he looks at the landscape*]
Here all is beautiful! The rustling boughs
Have such a strange, full sound. The darkling arms
Of the great firs move so mysteriously.
How solemnly their heads sway to and fro!
The very soul of fairy fantasy
Sighs through the wood. It murmurs low, and then,
Still gently whisp'ring, stirs the tiny leaves.
Now it goes singing through the green wood-grass.
And now, veiled all in misty white, it nears —
It stretches out its long white hand and points
At me! . . . Now closer, it draws! It touches my ear . . .
My tongue . . . my eyes! . . . 'Tis gone! Yet thou art here!
Thou art my fantasy! . . . Kiss me, sweet fantasy!
[*He faints*]
RAUTENDELEIN [*half to herself*]. Thy speech is strange. I know not what to make of 't.
[*She suddenly resolves to go*]
Lie thou, and sleep.
HEINRICH [*dreaming*]. Kiss me, sweet fantasy!
[RAUTENDELEIN *stops, and gazes at* HEINRICH. *The darkness deepens.* RAUTENDELEIN *suddenly grows frightened and calls*]
RAUTENDELEIN. O grandmother!
WITTIKIN [*from within the hut*]. Well, girl?
RAUTENDELEIN. Come here! Come here!
WITTIKIN [*as above*]. Nay, come thou here, and help me make the fire!
RAUTENDELEIN. O Granny!
WITTIKIN. Hark'ee, wench. Dost hear me? Come.
'Tis time we fed the goat. And then to milk it!
RAUTENDELEIN. Grandmother! Help him! Help him! He is dying!

[*Enter from hut,* WITTIKIN. *She stands on the threshold, holding a milk pail in her left hand, and calls to her cat*]

WITTIKIN. Here! Puss, Puss, Puss!
[*She looks carelessly at* HEINRICH]
He hasn't budged, I see.
Well — mortals all must die. No help for it.
What matter? Let him be. He's better so.
Come — pussy! pussy! . . . Here is milk for thee —
Why, where is pussy?
[*Calling*]

Hurry, hurry, wood-folk, when I call!
Here, I've milk a-plenty for ye all!
Hurry, hurry, hurry, trold and sprite!

[*Enter ten droll little* TROLDS, *male and female. They bustle about the milk pail*]

Here is bread — for every one a bite!
Here's enough to drink, and here's to eat:
Food that dukes and earls 'ud count a treat.
[*To one of the* TROLDS]
Thou, go!
Thou art full, I trow.
[*To the other* TROLDS]
For thee a sop —
And for thee a drop —
Now enough ye've guzzled,
And off ye hop!
[*They riot and shout*]
I'll have ye muzzled,
Unless ye stop!
Nay, this won't do —
Ye riotous crew!
Enough for to-day!
Away! Away!
[*The* TROLDS *vanish into the wood. Moonlight. The* WOOD-SPRITE *appears, seated on the rocks beyond the hut. Putting his horny hands to his mouth, he imitates the echo of a cry for help*]

THE WOOD-SPRITE. Help! Help!
WITTIKIN. Why, what's amiss?
DISTANT VOICES [*from the wood*]. Heinrich! Heinrich!
THE WOOD-SPRITE [*as above*]. Help! Help!
WITTIKIN [*threateningly to the* WOOD-SPRITE].
Fool, thy knavish antics cease!
Leave our mountain-folk in peace!
Ay, ay. It pleases thee to vent thy spite
On the poor glass-workers! . . . Thou lov'st to bite
Stray dogs — to lead lost travelers into logs,
And see them floundering in the moorland bogs.
THE WOOD-SPRITE. Granny, never heed my jests.
Soon thou shalt have noble guests!
Who rides on the goose's down?
The barber, light as lather.
Who rides on the goose's crown?
The parson, reverend father —
The teacher, with his cue —
Three screech-owls — all for you!
THE VOICES [*nearer*]. Heinrich!
THE WOOD-SPRITE [*as before*]. Help!
WITTIKIN. Now may the lightning strike thee!
Wouldst hang a schoolmaster about my neck,
And eke a parson?
[*Shaking her fist at the* WOOD-SPRITE]
Thou shalt smart for this.
I'll sent thee swarming gnats, and stinging flies,
To plague thee till thou shalt be so distraught
Thou'lt long to hide thyself.
THE WOOD-SPRITE [*with malignant glee*]. They're coming, Granny!
[*He disappears*]
WITTIKIN. Well, and what then? They're no concern o' mine.
[*To* RAUTENDELEIN, *who is gazing fixedly at* HEINRICH]
Into the hut! Blow out the light! To bed!
Quick, wench!
RAUTENDELEIN [*sullen and defiant*]. I won't!
WITTIKIN. What? Disobey me?
RAUTENDELEIN. Yes!
WITTIKIN. And why?
RAUTENDELEIN. They'll take him from me.
WITTIKIN. Well? What of 't?
RAUTENDELEIN. They must not take him, Granny!
WITTIKIN. Girl, ha' done!
And let them deal wi' him as they may list.
Dust will to dust, and some day he must die.
So let him die. He'll be the better for 't.
See how life irks him, how it rends his heart,
Wi' pain and agony.
HEINRICH [*dreaming*]. The Sun sets fast!
WITTIKIN. He never saw the Sun, girl! Let him be.
Come. Follow me. Be warned, or thou wilt rue!
[*Exit into hut. Cries of "Heinrich! Heinrich!" RAUTENDELEIN listens for a moment. Then she suddenly breaks a flowery twig from a bough, and draws a circle with it round* HEINRICH *as she speaks the following lines*]
RAUTENDELEIN. With the first fresh buds of Spring,
Lo, I draw the magic ring!
Safe from every harm and ill,
Thus thou art. It is my will!

Thou art thine, and thine, and mine.
None may cross the mystic line!
Be thou youth, or man, or maid,
Here thou surely must be stayed!
[*She hides behind the trees in shadow*]

[*Enter one after the other, from the wood, the* VICAR, *the* BARBER, *and the* SCHOOLMASTER]

THE VICAR. I see a light.
THE SCHOOLMASTER. And I!
THE VICAR. Where are we now?
THE BARBER. God only knows. Again I hear that cry
Of "Help! Help! Help!"
THE VICAR. It is the Master's voice!
THE SCHOOLMASTER. I heard no cry.
THE BARBER. It came from yonder height.
THE SCHOOLMASTER. If one fell up to Heaven, that might be,
But, as a general rule, one tumbles — down:
From cliff to vale, and not from vale to cliff.
The Master lies — I'd stake my soul upon 't —
Full fifty fathoms deeper: not up here.
THE BARBER. 'Ods bodikins! Did you not hear him then?
If that was not the voice of Master Heinrich,
May I be set to shave old Rübezahl!
As I'm a living barber, I will swear
I heard a cry.
THE SCHOOLMASTER. Where from?
THE VICAR. What place is this?
Ere we continue, tell me that, my friends.
My face is bleeding; I can hardly drag
One foot after another. How they do ache!
I'll go no further.
A VOICE. Help!
THE VICAR. Again that voice!
THE BARBER. And this time it was close to where we stand!
THE VICAR [*sitting wearily*]. I'm racked with pain. Indeed, my worthy friends,
I can no more. So leave me, in God's name.
In truth, though you should beat me black and blue,
You could not make me budge another step.
I am worn out. Alack, that this glad day
Should end so sadly! Who had ever thought
Such things could happen! And the mighty bell —
The noblest of the Master's masterworks ——!
Thy ways, O Lord, indeed pass finding out
And are most wonderful!
THE BARBER. Ay, Father, ay.
And do you wish to know what place this be?
Well, I will tell you. If you'll be advised,
You'll get from hence — and that without delay.
'Twere better far we spent the livelong night
Bare-backed, and in a hornet's nest, than here.
For, by the Lord, we're on the Silver Hill!
Within a hundred steps should stand the house
Of that accursèd witch. So — let's away!
THE VICAR. I cannot budge.
THE SCHOOLMASTER. Nay, come, I pray you, come.
Worse things than witches are encountered here.
If they were all, I should not turn a hair.
Ah, there's no wilder spot for leagues around —
A paradise of smugglers, thieves, and rogues —
A trysting-place for cut-throat murderers —
So infamous that Peter, — he who longed
To know what fear and trembling meant — might learn
Both easily — if he but came this way.
THE BARBER. Yes. One and one make two — we all know that.
But that is not the only thing worth knowing.
I hope, my master, you may never learn
What witchcraft means! . . . The hellish sluts who lurk,
Like toads in a hole, hatching their evil plots,
May send you illnesses, and plague your ox,
Make blood flow from the udders of your cows
Instead of milk, and rot your sheep with worms —
Or curse your children with unwholesome wens,
And horrible ulcers. All this they can do.
THE SCHOOLMASTER. You're wander-

ing, sirs. The night has turned your heads.
While you go babbling here of witches' games,
Your ears grow dull. Heard you not moans? By Heaven!
I see the very man we seek!
THE VICAR. See whom?
THE SCHOOLMASTER. Why, Master Heinrich.
THE BARBER. Oh, he's lost his wits!
THE VICAR. 'Twas witchcraft.
THE SCHOOLMASTER. Nay, then two and two's not four,
But five. And that's impossible. Prate not
Of witches. For, as I do hope for Heaven,
There lies the master bell-founder himself!
Look! Now the clouds have ceased to hide the moon.
Look, gentlemen! Now! Now! Well — was I right?
THE VICAR. Indeed you were, my master.
THE BARBER. 'Tis the bell-founder!
[*All three hurry towards* HEINRICH, *but recoil on reaching the edge of the magic ring*]
THE VICAR. Oh!
THE BARBER. Oh!
THE SCHOOLMASTER. Oh! Oh!
RAUTENDELEIN [*becoming visible for a moment among the trees*].
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!
[*She vanishes amid peals of mocking laughter. A pause*]
THE SCHOOLMASTER [*bewildered*]. What was it?
THE BARBER. Ay. What was 't?
THE VICAR. I heard a laugh!
THE SCHOOLMASTER. The bright light dazzled me. I do believe
It's made a hole in my head as big as my fist.
THE VICAR. You heard the laughter?
THE BARBER. Ay, and something cracked.
THE VICAR. The laughter seemed to come from every pine
That rustles round us in the growing gloom.
There! Yonder! Where the horn-owl hoots and flies!
THE BARBER. Didn't I tell you of these devilish folk?
O Lord, O Lord! I warned you of their spells.
D'ye think we're safe here? As for me, I quake —
My flesh creeps. Curses on the hag, say I!
THE VICAR [*raising the crucifix which hangs round his neck, and moving steadfastly toward the hut*].
You may be right. Yet, though the Devil himself
Dwelt here, I'd still say: Courage! On!
Against him we will pit God's Holy Word!
Ah! never yet was Satan's craft more clear
Than when he hurled the Master and the bell
To death — God's servant and his instrument —
The bell that, from the edge of the abyss
Had sung the hymn of everlasting Love,
And Peace, and Mercy, through the firmament!
Here stand we as true soldiers of the Lord!
I'll knock!
THE BARBER. D — d — don't risk it!
THE VICAR. Yes! I say, I'll knock!
[*He knocks at the door of the hut*]
WITTIKIN [*from within the hut*]. Who's there?
THE VICAR. A Christian!
WITTIKIN. Christian or no Christian,
What d'you want?
THE VICAR. Open!
WITTIKIN [*appearing in the doorway, carrying a lighted lantern*].
Well? What's your will?
THE VICAR. In God's name, woman, whom thou dost not know —
WITTIKIN. Oho! A pious opening, I declare!
THE SCHOOLMASTER. Thou carrion-crow, how durst thou wag thy tongue?
The measure's full — thy time is meted out.
Thy evil life and thy accursèd deeds
Have made thee hated through the countryside.
So — an thou do not now as thou art bid —
Ere dawn the red cock[1] from thy roof shall crow —
Thy den of thieves shall flame and smoke to Heaven!
THE BARBER [*crossing himself repeatedly*]. Thou wicked cat! I'm not afraid of thee!

[1] In Germany "der rothe Hahn" is a symbol of incendiarism.

Ay — scowl, and glare, and glower, as thou wilt!
Though thy red eyes should light upon my corpse,
They'll find the Cross before them. Do as thou'rt bid!

THE VICAR. I charge thee, woman, in God's holy name,
Have done with all thy devilish juggleries,
And help this man! Here lies a child of God,
A Master, gifted with a wondrous art
That him doth honor, while it puts to shame
The damnèd companies of air and Hell.

WITTIKIN [*who has been prowling round* HEINRICH *with her lantern*].
And, what's all that to do wi' me? Enough!
You're welcome to the creature. Take him hence.
What harm did I to him? For aught I care,
He may live on, till he has spent his breath.
I'll wager that won't be so very long!
Ye name him "Master," and ye love the sound
O' the big iron bells the creature makes.
Ye all are hard o' hearin', or ye'd know
There's no good in his bells. He knows it, too.
Ah, I could tell ye, an' I would, what's wrong.
The best and worst o' them ring false. They're cracked.
There! Take the litter. Bear the man away —
The "Master," as ye call him! Master Milksop!

[*To* HEINRICH]

Get up! Go home and help the parson preach!
Go — help the schoolmaster to birch his boys —
Go — mix the lather in the barber's shop!

[*The* BARBER *and the* SCHOOLMASTER *lift* HEINRICH *on to the litter*]

THE VICAR. Thou wicked, scolding hag! Restrain thy tongue!
Thy way shall lead thee straight to Hell. Begone!

WITTIKIN. Oh, spare your sermons. I ha' heard ye preach.
I know, I know. 'Tis sinful to ha' senses.
The earth's a coffin, and the Heavens above
Are but a coffin-lid. The stars are holes;
The sun's a bigger hole in the blue sky.
The world 'ud come to grief wi'out the priests,
And God himself ye'd make a bug-a-boo!
The Lord should take a rod to ye — poor fools!
Ay, fools are ye — all, all! and nothing more!

[*She bangs open her door and goes into hut*]

THE VICAR. Thou beldame!

THE BARBER. For Heaven's sake — don't vex her more!
If you should goad her further, we are lost.

[*Exeunt the* VICAR, *the* SCHOOLMASTER, *and the* BARBER *into the wood, bearing away* HEINRICH *on the litter. The moon shines out, and lights up the peaceful landscape.* FIRST, SECOND, *and* THIRD ELVES *steal out of the wood one after the other and join hands in a dance*]

FIRST ELF [*whispering*].
Sister!

SECOND ELF [*as above*].
Sister!

FIRST ELF [*as above*]. White and chill
Shines the moon across the hill.
Over bank, and over brae,
Queen she is, and Queen shall stay.

SECOND ELF. Whence com'st thou?

FIRST ELF. From where the light
In the waterfall gleams bright,
Where the glowing flood doth leap,
Roaring, down into the deep.
Then, from out the mirk and mist,
Where the foaming torrent hissed,
Past the dripping rocks and spray,
Up I swiftly made my way.

THIRD ELF [*joining them*]. Sisters, is it here ye dance?

FIRST ELF. Wouldst thou join us? Quick — advance!

SECOND ELF. And whence com'st thou?

THIRD ELF. Hark and hist!
Dance, and dance, as ye may list!
'Mid the rocky peaks forlorn
Lies the lake where I was born.
Starry gems are mirrored clear
On the face of that dark mere.
Ere the fickle moon could wane,
Up I swept my silver train.
Where the mountain breezes sigh,
Over clove and crag came I!

FOURTH ELF [*entering*].
Sisters!
FIRST ELF. Sister! Join the round!
ALL [*together*]. Ring-a-ring-a-ring-around!
FOURTH ELF. From Dame Holle's flowery brae,
Secretly I stole away.
FIRST ELF. Wind and wander, in and out!
ALL [*together*]. Ring-a-ring-a-round-about!
[*Lightning and distant thunder*]

[*Enter suddenly, from the hut,* RAUTENDELEIN. *Clasping her hands behind her head, she watches the dance from the doorway. The moonlight falls full on her*]

RAUTENDELEIN. Ho, my fairies!
FIRST ELF. Hark! A cry!
SECOND ELF. Owch! My dress is all awry!
RAUTENDELEIN. Ho, ye fairies!
THIRD ELF. Oh, my gown!
Flit and flutter, up and down.
RAUTENDELEIN [*joining in the dance*].
Let me join the merry round.
Ring-a-ring-a-ring-around!
Silver nixey, sweetest maid,
See how richly I'm arrayed.
All of silver, white and rare,
Granny wove my dress so fair.
Thou, my fairy brown, I vow,
Browner far am I than thou.
And, my golden sister fair,
I can match thee with my hair,
Now I toss it high — behold,
Thou hast surely no such gold.
Now it tumbles o'er my face:
Who can rival me in grace?
ALL [*together*]. Wind and wander in, and out,
Ring-a-ring-a-round-about!
RAUTENDELEIN. Into the gulf there fell a bell.
Where is it lying? Will ye tell?
ALL [*together*]. Wind and wander, in and out,
Ring-a-ring-a-round-about!
Daisy and forget-me-not,
Fairy footsteps injure not.

[*Enter the* WOOD-SPRITE, *skipping. Thunder — this time louder. During the following speech, a storm rages — thunder and hail*]

THE WOOD-SPRITE. Daisy and forget-me-not
Crush I in the earth to rot.
If the moorland's all a-drip
'Tis because I leap, and skip!
Now the bull doth seek his mate,
Bellows at the stable gate.
And the heifer, sleeping by,
Lifts her head and lows reply.
On the stallion's warm brown hide
Every fly doth seek his bride,
While the midges dance above,
Fill the air with life and love.
See! The ostler woos the maid!
Buss her, fool! Dost fear the jade?
With the rotting straw for bed,
Soft and tender, lo they wed!
Hul'lo! Hul'lo! Heigh-o-hey!
Whisp'ring's over for to-day.
Done the dancing, hushed and chill,
Lusty life is master still!
Be it early, be it late,
Mews the tom-cat, mews its mate.
Nightingale, and thrush, and stork,
Hart, and hare, and hen, and hawk,
Snipe, and quail, and swan, and duck,
Crane, and pheasant, doe and buck,
Beetle, moth, and mole, and louse,
Toad, and frog, and bat, and mouse,
Bee, and gnat, and moth, and fly —
All must love, and all must die!
[*The* WOOD-SPRITE *snatches up one of the* ELVES *and carries her off into the wood. The three other* ELVES *vanish in different directions.* RAUTENDELEIN *remains standing alone and sad, in the middle of the glade. The storm gradually dies away*]

[THE NICKELMANN *rises from the well, as before*]
THE NICKELMANN. Brekekekex! — Brekekekex! Hey! Ho!
Why dost thou stand there?
RAUTENDELEIN. Thou dear water-sprite —
Alas, I am so sad. So sad am I!
THE NICKELMANN [*mockingly*]. Brekekekex! And which eye hurts thee, dear?
RAUTENDELEIN [*gaily*]. The left eye.
But, perhaps, thou think'st I jest?
THE NICKELMANN. Ay, surely, surely.
RAUTENDELEIN [*pointing to a tear in her eye*]. Look — what can it be?
THE NICKELMANN. What dost thou mean?
RAUTENDELEIN. Why — see what's in my eye!
THE NICKELMANN. What's in thine eye? Come — let me see it close.
RAUTENDELEIN. A warm, wet drop has fallen on my lid.

THE NICKELMANN. The deuce it has! Come nearer — let me see.
RAUTENDELEIN [*holding out the tear to him*]. A tiny, pure, warm, glitt'ring drop of dew.
There, only see!
THE NICKELMANN. By Heaven! 'Tis beautiful.
How would it please thee an I took the thing
And set it in a fine, pink shell for thee?
RAUTENDELEIN. Why, as thou wilt. I'll lay it on the edge
Of the well. What can it be?
THE NICKELMANN. A wondrous gem!
Within that little globe lies all the pain,
And all the joy, the world can ever know.
'Tis called — a tear!
RAUTENDELEIN. A tear! . . . I must have wept.
So now at last I've learned what these tears be . . .
Oh, tell me something!
THE NICKELMANN. Come to me, dear child!
RAUTENDELEIN. Not I, forsooth. What good were that to me?
The edge of thine old well is wet and rough;
'Tis overrun with spiders, worms and — worse.
They irk me — all of them. And so dost thou.
THE NICKELMANN. Brekekekex! I grieve to hear it, dear.
RAUTENDELEIN. Another of those drops! How strange!
THE NICKELMANN. More rain!
Behold! Now Father Thor is all ablaze.
The lightnings from his beard fall soft, and blink
Like babies' eyes, setting the misty train
Of rolling clouds aglow with purple flame.
And yonder, near the grey, mark how a flight
Of ravens rushes madly through the night
To keep him company. With every flash
Their wings gleam wetter in the whirling rain.
Hark, child, how thirstily our Mother Earth
Drinks every drop! And how the trees and grass,
The flies and worms, grow glad in the quick light!
[*Lightning*]
Quorax! Now in the valley! Master! Hail!
Old Thor is kindling a rare Easter fire.
His hammer flares — twelve thousand miles it sweeps!
The church-tower totters — now the belfry cracks!
The smoke pours out! . . .
RAUTENDELEIN. Enough! Enough! No more!
Come, tell me something else. I'm tired of Thor.
THE NICKELMANN. Thou saucy sparrow, thou —— Brekekekex!
What ails the creature? When it's stroked — it pecks.
A pretty way to thank one! When you're done,
You're no bit further than ere you'd begun!
Am I not right? . . . Still pouting, eh? . . . Well, well.
What wouldst thou know?
RAUTENDELEIN. Oh, nothing. Do but go!
THE NICKELMANN. Naught thou wouldst know?
RAUTENDELEIN. Naught!
THE NICKELMANN [*imploringly*]. Then, speak thou, I pray.
RAUTENDELEIN. I long to leave you all and go away!
[*Her eyes fill with tears and she stares into the distance*]
THE NICKELMANN [*with anguish*]. What have I done to thee? Where wouldst thou go?
Is it the world of men that thou wouldst know?
I warn thee, maiden. Man's a curious thing,
Who naught but woe to such as thou could bring.
Although, perchance, with ours his fate's entwined,
He is, yet is not quite, of our own kind.
His world is ours — and yet, I say, beware!
Half here, he lives — half, no one could tell where!
Half he's our brother; yet, this many a day,
A foe he's been, and lost to us for aye.
Woe, woe to all who our free mountains flee
To join these mortals, hoping bliss to see!
Man's feet are in the Earth. In toil and pain
He lives his fleeting life. And yet — he's vain.

He's like a plant that in a cellar shoots,
And needs must pluck and pluck at its own roots.
So, languishing for light, he rots away,
Nor ever knows the joy of one sun-ray.
The breath of Spring that kisses the green leaf,
To sickly boughs brings death, and not relief.
Pry thou no further, but let Man alone:
Lest thou should hang about thy neck — a stone.
Man will but sadden thee with his grey skies,
And turn thy happy laugh to tears and sighs.
Thou shalt be chained unto an ancient Book.
Accurst — no more upon the Sun thou'lt look!

RAUTENDELEIN. Grandmother says thou art a learned seer.
Yet, an thou wilt but in thy waters peer,
Thou'lt see that never yet a rill did flow
But longed into the world of men to go.

THE NICKELMANN [*angrily*]. Quorax! Brekekekex! Be not so bold.
Hear now the words of one ten centuries old!
Let slavish streams pursue their fated way,
Work, wash, for men, and grind their corn each day,
Water their cabbages and garden stuff,
And swallow — Heav'n knows what! And now . . . enough!

[*Warmly and earnestly*]

But, O my dear Princess Rautendelein,
For thee a King's chamber were none too fine.
I know a rare crown, all of crystal so green,
In a great golden hall, thou shalt wear it, my queen.
The floor and the roof are of clear blue stone,
Red coral the coffers and chests I own. . . .

RAUTENDELEIN. And what though thy coffers of coral be wrought?
Life lived with the fishes were good for naught.
And though thy King's crown of pure sapphire should be,
Thy daughters should prink it alone with thee.
My own golden tresses are far more dear;
Their touch a caress is; my crown's — here!

[*She turns to go*]

THE NICKELMANN. Where art thou going?

RAUTENDELEIN [*airily and indifferently*]. What is that to thee?

THE NICKELMANN [*sorrowfully*]. Much. Much. Brekekekex!

RAUTENDELEIN. Oh, whither I will Go I.

THE NICKELMANN. And whither wouldst go?

RAUTENDELEIN. Away and away!

THE NICKELMANN. Away and away?

RAUTENDELEIN [*flinging her arms aloft*]. To the world — of men!

[*She vanishes in the wood*]

THE NICKELMANN [*terrified*].

Quorax!

[*Whimpering*]

Quorax!

[*Softly*]

Quorax!

[*Shaking his head sadly*]

Brekekekex!

ACT II

An old-fashioned room in the house of HEINRICH, *the bell-founder. A deep recess occupies half the back wall. In the recess is a large open fireplace, with a chimney above it. A copper kettle is suspended above the unlighted fire. The other half of the back wall, set at an angle, is lighted by a large old-fashioned window, with bottle-glass panes. Below this window, a bed. Doors right and left. That on the right leads to the workshop, while that on the left leads to the courtyard. Left centre a table and chairs placed. On the table: a full jug of milk, mugs, and a loaf of bread. Near the table, a tub. The room is decorated with works by Adam Kraft, Peter Fischer, etc., conspicuous among them a painted wooden image of Christ on the Cross.*

DISCOVERED: *Seated at the farther side of the table, and, in their Sunday best, the two* CHILDREN (*boys*) *of* HEINRICH (*aged respectively five and nine*), *with their mugs of milk before them.* MAGDA, *their mother, also in her Sunday best, enters left, with a bunch of cowslips in her hand.*

Early morning. The light grows brighter as the action progresses.

MAGDA. See, children, what I've brought you from the fields!
Beyond the garden — a whole patch grew wild.

Now we can make ourselves look fine and gay,
In honor of your father's birthday feast.
FIRST CHILD. Oh, give me some!
SECOND CHILD. And me!
MAGDA. There! Five for each!
And every single one they say's a key [1]
That opens Heaven. Now drink your milk, my dears,
And eat your bread. 'Tis almost time to start.
The road to church, you know, is long and steep.
NEIGHBOR [*a woman*]. [*Looking in at the window*]
What! Up already, neighbor?
MAGDA [*at the window*]. Yes, indeed.
I hardly closed my eyes the livelong night.
But, 'twas not care that kept me wide-awake.
So now I'm just as fresh as if I'd slept
Sound as a dormouse. Why, how bright it is!
NEIGHBOR. Ay. Ay. You're right.
MAGDA. You'll come with us, I hope?
Now don't say no. You'll find it easy walking
On the road . . . These tiny feet
Shall lead the way, and gently mark our steps.
If you must have the truth, I long for wings:
I'm wild to-day with joy and eagerness!
NEIGHBOR. And has your good-man not been home all night?
MAGDA. What are you dreaming of? I'll be content
If only the big bell is safely hung
In time to ring the people in to mass!
You see — the time was short. They'd none to waste.
And as for sleeping — if the Master snatched
So much as one short wink in the wood-grass —
Why, Heaven be praised! But, oh, what does it matter?
The work was hard: but great is the reward.
You cannot think how pure, and clear, and true
The new bell sounds. Just wait until you hear
Its voice ring out to-day from the church tower.
'Tis like a prayer, a hymn, a song of praise —
Filling the heart with comfort and with gladness.
NEIGHBOR. No doubt, ma'am. Yet one thing amazes me.
From my front door, as doubtless you're aware,
The church upon the hill is plainly seen.
Now — I had heard that when the bell was hung
A white flag would be hoisted from the tower.
I've seen no sign of that white flag. Have you?
MAGDA. Oh, look again. It must be there by now.
NEIGHBOR. No, no. It's not.
MAGDA. Well, even were you right,
It would not frighten me. Did you but know
The fret and toil and pain, by night and day,
It costs the Master to complete his work,
You would not wonder if the final stroke
Should be delayed a bit. I understand.
By this time, I'll be bound, the flag is there.
Why, yes, I'm sure it is, could we but see 't.
NEIGHBOR. I can't believe it. In the village streets
They do say something dreadful has occurred.
Dark omens, boding evil, fill the air.
But now, a farmer saw a naked witch,
Perched on a boar's back, riding through his corn.
Lifting a stone, he cast it at the hag —
Straightway his hand dropped — palsied to the knuckles!
'Tis said that all the mischievous mountain sprites
Are leagued and up in arms against the bell.
How strange you have not heard all this before!
Well — now the Bailiff's gone into the hills,
With half the village at his heels, to see . . .
MAGDA. The Bailiff? Merciful God! What can be wrong?
NEIGHBOR. Why, nothing's certain. All may yet be well.
There — don't take on so, neighbor. Come — be calm!
It's not so bad as that. Now don't 'ee fret.
It seems the wagon and the bell broke down . . .
That's all we've heard.
MAGDA. Pray Heav'n that be the worst!

[1] In German the cowslip is called "Himmelschlüssel," *i.e.*, "the key of Heaven."

What matters one bell more or less! . . . If he,
The Master, be but safe — these flowers may stay.
Yet — till we know what's happened. . . . Here, prithee,
Take the two children . . .

[*She lifts the two* CHILDREN *through the window*]

Will you?

NEIGHBOR. Why, to be sure.

MAGDA. Thanks. Take them home with you. And, as for me,
Ah, I must go, as fast as go I can,
To see what may be done — to help. For I
Must be with my dear Master — or, I die!

[*Exit hurriedly*]

[*The* NEIGHBOR *retires with the* CHILDREN. *Confused noise of voices without. Then a piercing cry from* MAGDA]

[*Enter quickly the* VICAR, *sighing, and wiping the tears from his eyes. He looks round the room hastily, and turns down the coverlet of the bed. Then, hurrying to the door, he meets the* SCHOOLMASTER *and the* BARBER, *carrying* HEINRICH *in on the litter seen in Act One.* HEINRICH *reclines on a rude bed of green branches.* MAGDA, *half beside herself with anguish, follows, supported by a* MAN *and a* WOMAN. *Crowd of* VILLAGERS *presses in behind* MAGDA. HEINRICH *is laid on his own bed*]

THE VICAR [*to* MAGDA]. Bear up, my mistress! Put your trust in God!
We laid him on our litter as one dead;
Yet, on the way, he came to life again,
And, as the doctor told us, only now,
Hope's not yet lost.

MAGDA [*moaning*]. Dear God, who speaks of hope?
A moment since, I was so happy! . . . Now —
What's come to me? What's happened? Won't you speak?
Where are the children?

THE VICAR. Put your trust in God.
Do but have patience, mistress. Patience and faith!
Often — remember — in our direst need
God's help is nearest. And, forget not this:
Should He, of His all-wisdom, have resolved,
In His own time, to call the Master hence,
Still there shall be this comfort for your soul —
Your husband goes from Earth to endless bliss.

MAGDA. Why do you speak of comfort, reverend sir?
Do I need comfort? Nay — he will get well.
He must get well.

THE VICAR. So all of us do hope.
But . . . should he not . . . God's holy will be done.
Come now what may, the Master's fight is won.
To serve the Lord, he fashioned his great bell.
To serve the Lord, he scaled the mountain-heights —
Where the malignant powers of Darkness dwell,
And the Abyss defies the God of Hosts.
Serving the Lord, at last he was laid low —
Braving the hellish spirits in his path.
They feared the gospel that his bell had rung:
So leagued themselves against him, one and all,
In devilish brotherhood. God punish them!

THE BARBER. A wonder-working woman lives hard by,
Who heals, as the Disciples healed of old,
By prayer and faith.

THE VICAR. Let some one search for her:
And when she's found, return with her at once.

MAGDA. What's come to him? Why do you stand and gape?
Off with you all! You shall not stare at him
With your unfeeling eyes. D'you hear? Begone!
Cover him — so — with linen, lest your looks
Should shame the Master. Now — away with you!
Get to the juggler's, if you needs must gape.
Ah, God! What's happened? . . . Are ye all struck dumb?

THE SCHOOLMASTER. Truly, 'tis hard to tell just what took place.
Whether he tried to stop the bell — or what . . .
This much is certain: if you could but see
How deep he fell, you would go down on your knees

And thank the Lord. For, if your husband lives,
'Tis nothing short of the miraculous!
HEINRICH [*feebly*]. Give me a little water!
MAGDA [*driving out the* VILLAGERS *quickly*]. Out you go!
THE VICAR. Go, my good people. He has need of rest.
[VILLAGERS *withdraw*]
If I can serve you, mistress, why, you know
Where you may find me.
THE BARBER. Yes, and me.
THE SCHOOLMASTER. And me.
No. On reflection, I'll stay here.
MAGDA. You'll go!
HEINRICH. Give me some water!
[*The* VICAR, SCHOOLMASTER, *and* BARBER *withdraw slowly, talking low, shaking their heads, and shrugging their shoulders*]
MAGDA [*hastening to* HEINRICH *with water*]. Heinrich, are you awake?
HEINRICH. I'm parched. Give me some water. Can't you hear?
MAGDA [*unable to control herself*]. Nay, patience.
HEINRICH. Magda, all too soon I'll learn
What patience means. Bear with me yet a while.
It will not be for long.
[*He drinks*]
Thanks, Magda. Thanks.
MAGDA. Don't speak to me so strangely, Heinrich. Don't!
I . . . I'm afraid.
HEINRICH [*fevered and angry*]. Thou must not be afraid.
When I am gone, thou'lt have to live alone.
MAGDA. I cannot . . . no, I will not . . . live without thee!
HEINRICH. Thy pain is childish. Torture me no more!
It is unworthy, — for thou art a mother.
Bethink thee what that word means, and be brave!
MAGDA. Ah, do not be so stern and harsh with me!
HEINRICH [*painfully*]. The plain truth harsh and stern? Again I say —
Thy place is by the bedside of thy boys.
There lies thy joy, thy peace, thy work, thy life.
All — all is tucked up in their fair, white sheets.
Could it be otherwise, 'twere infamous!
MAGDA [*falling on his neck*]. So help me Heav'n, I love thee far, far more
Than our dear children, and myself, and all!
HEINRICH. Then woe unto ye all, too soon bereaved!
And thrice-unhappy I, untimely doomed
To snatch the milk and bread from your poor lips!
Yet, on my tongue, I feel them turn to poison.
That, too, is just! . . . Farewell. Thee I commend
To one from whom none living may escape.
Many a man has found Death's deepest shadow
Prove but a welcome light. God grant it be!
[*Tenderly*]
Give me thy hand. I've done thee many a wrong
By word and deed. Often I've grieved thy heart,
Far, far, too often. But thou wilt forgive me!
I would have spared thee, had I but been free.
I know not what compelled me; yet I know
I could not choose but stab thee — and myself.
Forgive me, Magda!
MAGDA. I forgive thee? What?
If thou dost love me, Heinrich, be less sad:
Or thou wilt bring the tears back. Rather — scold.
Thou knowest well how dear —
HEINRICH [*painfully*]. I do not know!
MAGDA. Nay, who, but thou, did wake my woman's soul?
Till thou didst come, I was a poor, dull, clod,
Pining away beneath a cheerless sky.
Thou — thou — didst rescue me and make me live,
Fill me with joy, and set my heart in the sun.
And never did I feel thy love more sure
Than when, with thy strong hand, thou'dst draw my face
Out of the dark, and turn it towards the light.
And thou wouldst have me pardon thee! For what?
Do I not owe thee all I love in life?
HEINRICH. Strangely entangled seems the web of souls.
MAGDA [*stroking his hair tenderly*]. If I have ever been a help to thee —

If I have sometimes cheered thy working hours —
If favor in thine eyes I ever found . . .
Bethink thee, Heinrich: I, who would have given
Thee everything — my life — the world itself —
I had but that to pay thee for thy love!
HEINRICH [*uneasily*]. I'm dying. That is best. God means it well.
Should I live on . . . Come nearer, wife, and hear me.
'Tis better for us both that I should die.
Thou think'st, because we blossomed out together,
I was the sun that caused thy heart to bloom.
But that the eternal Wonder-Worker wrought,
Who, on the wings of His chill winter-storms,
Rides through a million million wood-land flowers,
Slaying them, as He passes, in their Spring!
'Tis better for us both that I should die.
See: I was cracked and aging — all misshaped.
If the great Bell-Founder who moulded me
Tosses aside His work, I shall not mourn.
When He did hurl me down to the abyss,
After my own poor, faulty handiwork,
I did not murmur: for my work was bad!
Good-wife — the bell that sank into the mere
Was not made for the heights — it was not fit
To wake the answering echoes of the peaks!
MAGDA. I cannot read the meaning of thy words.
A work — so highly-prized, so free from flaw,
So clear and true that, when it first rang out
Between the mighty trees from which it hung,
All marveled and exclaimed, as with one voice,
"The Master's bell sings as the Angels sing!"
HEINRICH [*fevered*]. 'Twas for the valley, not the mountain-top!
MAGDA. That is not true! Hadst thou but heard, as I,
The Vicar tell the Clerk, in tones that shook,
"How gloriously 'twill sound upon the heights!" . . .
HEINRICH. 'Twas for the valley — not the mountain-top!
I only know 't. The Vicar does not know.
So I must die — I wish to die, my child.
For, look now: should I heal — as men would call 't —
Thanks to the art of our good village leech,
I'd be at best a botch, a crippled wretch;
And so the warm and generous draught of life —
Ofttimes I've found it bitter, ofttimes sweet,
But ever it was strong, as I did drink 't —
Would turn to a stale, flat, unsavory brew,
Thin and grown cold and sour. I'll none of it!
Let him who fancies it enjoy the draught.
Me it would only sicken and repel.
Hush! Hear me out. Though thou shouldst haply find
A doctor of such skill that he could cure me,
Giving me back my joy — nerving my hand,
Till it could turn to the old, daily task —
Even then, Magda, I were still undone.
MAGDA. For God's sake, husband, tell me what to think!
What has come over thee — a man so strong,
So blessed, so weighted down with Heaven's best gifts:
Respected, loved, of all — of all admired,
A master of thy craft! . . . A hundred bells
Hast thou set ringing, in a hundred towers.
They sing thy praise, with restless industry;
Pouring the deep, glad beauty of thy soul
As from a hundred wine-cups, through the land.
At eve, the purple-red — at dawn, God's gold —
Know thee. Of both thou art become a part.
And thou — rich, rich, beyond thy greatest need —
Thou, voicing God — able to give, and give,
Rolling in happiness, where others go
Begging their daily dole of joy or bread —
Thou look'st unthankfully upon thy work!
Then, Heinrich, why must I still bear the life

That thou dost hate so? . . . What is life to me?
What could that be to me which thou dost scorn —
Casting it from thee, like a worthless thing!
HEINRICH. Mistake me not. Now thou thyself hast sounded
Deeper and clearer than my loudest bells.
And many a one I've made! . . . I thank thee, Magda.
Yet thou shalt understand my thought. Thou must.
Listen! . . . The latest of my works had failed.
With anguished heart I followed where they climbed,
Shouting and cursing loudly, as the bell
Was dragged towards the peak. And then — it fell.
It fell a hundred fathoms deep, ay more,
Into the mere. There, in the mere, now lies
The last and noblest work my art could mould!
Not all my life, as I have lived it, Magda,
Had fashioned, or could fashion, aught so good.
Now I have thrown it after my bad work.
While I lie drinking the poor dregs of life,
Deep in the waters of the lake it's drowned.
I mourn not for what's lost. And then — I mourn:
Knowing this only — neither bell, nor life,
Shall evermore come back. Alas! woe's me!
My heart's desire was bound up in the tones —
The buried tones — I never more shall hear.
And now the life to which I clung so tight
Is turned to bitterness, and grief, and rue,
Madness, and gloom, confusion, pain, and gall!
. . . . . .
Well, let life go! The service of the valleys
Charms me no longer, and no more their peace
Calms my wild blood. Since on the peak I stood,
All that I am has longed to rise, and rise,
Cleaving the mists, until it touched the skies!
I would work wonders with the power on high:
And, since I may not work them, being so weak;
Since, even could I, with much straining, rise,
I should but fall again — I choose to die!
Youth — a new youth — I'd need, if I should live:
Out of some rare and magic mountain flower
Marvelous juices I should need to press —
Heart-health, and strength, and the mad lust of triumph,
Steeling my hand to work none yet have dreamed of!
MAGDA. O Heinrich, Heinrich, did I but know the spot
Where that thou pantest for, the Spring of Youth,
Lies hid, how gladly would these feet of mine
Wear themselves out to find it for thee! Yea,
Even though the waters which restored thy life
Should bring me death!
HEINRICH [*tormented, collapsing and delirious*]. Thou dearest, truest! . . . No, I will not drink!
Keep it! . . . The Spring is full of blood! . . . blood! . . . blood!
I will not! . . . No! . . . Leave me . . . and . . . let me . . . die!
[*He becomes unconscious*]

[*Enter the* VICAR]

THE VICAR. How goes it with the patient, mistress?
MAGDA. Ill!
Terribly ill! He's sick in every part.
Some strange, mysterious pain's consuming him.
I know not what to fear, and what to hope.
[*Hurriedly throwing a scarf over her shoulders*]
Did you not speak of a woman who works miracles?
THE VICAR. I did. Indeed, 'tis that has brought me back.
She lives . . . at most a mile away from here . . .
Her name . . . I can't recall it. But she lives,
If I mistake not, in the pinewood . . . Ay . . .

Her name . . .
MAGDA. Not Wittikin?
THE VICAR. How can you ask!
Why, she's a wicked witch, the Devil's dam,
And she must die. By now they're up in arms,
Eager for battle with the pestilent fiend.
With cudgels, torches, stones, they're hurrying fast
To make an end of her. For you must know
She's charged with all the evil that afflicts us.
No. I was thinking of . . . Frau Findeklee . . .
A shepherd's widow . . . and a worthy soul . . .
Her husband left her an old recipe
Which, as I am assured by many here,
Has wondrous virtues. Will you go for her?
MAGDA. Yes, yes, most reverend sir!
THE VICAR. You'll go at once?

[*Enter* RAUTENDELEIN, *disguised as a peasant girl, and carrying a basket of berries in her hand*]

MAGDA [*to* RAUTENDELEIN]. What wouldst thou, child? . . . Who art thou? . . .
THE VICAR. Why — 'tis Anna,
Anna — the maiden from the wayside inn.
Nay, 'twould be vain to question her. Alas,
She's dumb. A good girl. Ah, she's brought some berries.
MAGDA. Come here, my child . . . What was't I wished to say . . .
Ah, yes! This man lies sick. When he awakes
Be near to help him. Dost thou understand me?
Frau Findeklee . . . That was the name, you said? . . .
But, no; I cannot go. It is too far.
If you'll stay here a moment, I am sure,
My neighbor will go for me . . . I'll come back.
And don't forget . . . O God, my heart will break!
[*Exit*]
THE VICAR [*to* RAUTENDELEIN]. Stand here, my child; or, if thou wilt, sit down,
Be good and do the very best thou canst.
Make thyself helpful, while they need thy help.
God will reward thee for the work thou doest.
Thou art greatly changed, dear child, since last I saw thee.
But keep thou honest — be a good, true maid —
For the dear Lord has blessed thee with much beauty.
In truth, my dear, now that I look at thee,
Thou art, yet art not, Anna. As a princess
Stepped from the pages of some fairy book,
Thou seem'st. So quickly changed! Who would have thought
It possible! Well, well! . . . Thou'lt keep him cool?
He's burning! [*To* HEINRICH] May God bring thee back to health!
[*Exit*]

[RAUTENDELEIN, *who till now has seemed shy and meek, changes suddenly and bustles about the hearth*]

RAUTENDELEIN. Flickering spark in the ash of death,
Glow with life of living breath!
Red, red wind, thy loudest blow!
I, as thou, did lawless grow!
Simmer, sing, and simmer!

[*The flame leaps up on the hearth*]

. . . . . .
Kettle swaying left and right —
Copper-lid, thou'rt none too light!
Bubble, bubble, broth and brew,
Turning all things old to new!
Simmer, sing, and simmer!
. . . . . .
Green and tender herbs of Spring,
In the healing draught I fling.
Drink it sweet, and drink it hot —
Life and youth are in the pot!
Simmer, sing, and simmer!
. . . . . .
And now to scrape the roots and fetch the water.
The cask is empty . . . But we need more light!
[*She throws the window wide open*]
A glorious day! But there'll be wind anon.
A mighty cloud, in shape like some huge fish,
Lies on the hills. To-morrow it will burst;
And roystering spirits will ride madly down,

Sweeping athwart the pines, to reach the vale.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!. . . Here, too, the cuckoo calls,
And the swift swallow darts across the sky . . .

[HEINRICH *has opened his eyes, and lies staring at* RAUTENDELEIN]

But now to scrape my roots, and fetch the water.
I've much to do since I turned waiting-maid.
Thou, thou, dear flame, shalt cheer me at my work.
HEINRICH [*amazed*]. Tell me . . . who art thou?
RAUTENDELEIN [*quickly and unconcernedly*]. I? Rautendelein.
HEINRICH. Rautendelein? I never heard that name.
Yet somewhere I have seen thee once before.
Where was it?
RAUTENDELEIN. Why, 'twas on the mountain-side.
HEINRICH. True. True. 'Twas there — what time I fevered lay.
I dreamt I saw thee there . . . Again I dream.
At times we dream strange dreams! See. Here's my house.
There burns the fire upon the well-known hearth.
Here lie I, in my bed, sick unto death.
I push the window back. There flies a swallow.
Yonder the nightingales are all at play.
Sweet scents float in — of jasmine . . . elder-blossom . . .
I see . . . I feel . . . I know . . . the smallest thing —
Even to the pattern of this coverlet . . .
Each thread . . . each tiny knot . . . I could describe —
And yet I'm dreaming.
RAUTENDELEIN. Thou art dreaming? Why?
HEINRICH [*in anguish*]. Because . . . I must be dreaming.
RAUTENDELEIN. Art thou so sure?
HEINRICH. Yes. No. Yes. No. I'm wandering. Let me dream on!
Thou askest if I am so sure. I know not.
Ah, be it what it will: or dream, or life — It is. I feel it, see it — thou dost live!
Real or unreal, within me or without,
Child of my brain, or whatsoe'er thou art,
Still I do love thee, for thou art thyself.
So stay with me, sweet spirit. Only stay!
RAUTENDELEIN. So long as thou shalt choose.
HEINRICH. Then . . . I do dream.
RAUTENDELEIN [*familiarly*]. Take care. Dost see me lift this little foot
With the rosy heel? Thou dost? Why, that is well.
Now — here's a hazel nut. I take it — so —
Between my finger and my dainty thumb —
I set my heel on it. Crack! Now, 'tis broken.
Was that a dream?
HEINRICH. That only God can tell.
RAUTENDELEIN. Now watch me. See. I'll come quite close to thee,
And sit upon thy bed. So. Here I am! . . .
Feasting away as merrily as thou wilt . . .
Hast thou not room enough?
HEINRICH. I've all I need.
But tell me whence thou'rt sprung and who has sent thee!
What would'st thou of a broken, suffering man,
A bundle of sorrow, drawing near the end
Of his brief pilgrimage . . . ?
RAUTENDELEIN. I like thee.
Whence I did spring I know not — nor could tell
Whither I go. But Granny said one day
She found me lying in the moss and weeds.
A hind did give me suck. My home's the wood,
The mountain-side, the crag, the storm-swept moor —
Where the wind moans and rages, shrieks and groans,
Or purrs and mews, like some wild tiger-cat!
There thou wilt find me, whirling through the air;
There I laugh loud and shout for sheer mad joy;
Till faun and nixey, gnome and water-sprite,
Echo my joy and split their sides with laughter.
I'm spiteful when I'm vexed, and scratch and bite:
And who should anger me had best beware.
Yet — 'tis no better when I'm left alone:
For good and bad in me's all mood and impulse.

I'm thus, or thus, and change with each new whim.
But thee I am fond of . . . Thee I would not scratch.
And, if thou wilt, I'll stay. Yet were it best
Thou camest with me to my mountain home.
Then thou should'st see how faithfully I'd serve thee.
I'd show thee diamonds, and rubies rare,
Hid at the bottom of unfathomed deeps.
Emeralds, and topazes, and amethysts—
I'd bring thee all — I'd hang upon thy lids!
Froward, unruly, lazy, I may be;
Spiteful, rebellious, wayward, what thou wilt!
Yet thou shouldst only need to blink thine eye,
And ere thou'dst time to speak, I'd nod thee — yes.
And Granny tells me . . .

HEINRICH. Ah, thou dear, dear child.
Tell me, who is thy Granny?

RAUTENDELEIN. Dost thou not know?

HEINRICH. No.

RAUTENDELEIN. Not know Granny?

HEINRICH. No, I am a man,
And blind.

RAUTENDELEIN. Soon thou shalt see! To me is given
The power to open every eye I kiss
To the most hidden mysteries of earth
And air.

HEINRICH. Then . . . kiss me!

RAUTENDELEIN. Thou'lt keep still?

HEINRICH. Nay, try me!

RAUTENDELEIN [*kissing his eyes*]. Ye eyes, be opened!

HEINRICH. Ah, thou lovely child,
Sent to enchant me in my dying hour —
Thou fragrant blossom, plucked by God's own hand
In the forgotten dawn of some dead Spring —
Thou free, fair bud — ah, were I but that man
Who, in the morn of life, fared forth so glad —
How I would press thee to this leaping heart!
Mine eyes were blinded. Now, they're filled with light,
And, as by instinct, I divine thy world.
Ay, more and more, as I do drink thee in,
Thou dear enigma, I am sure I see.

RAUTENDELEIN. Why — look at me, then, till thine eyes are tired.

HEINRICH. How golden gleams thy hair! How dazzling bright! . . .
With thee for company, thou dearest dream,
Old Charon's boat becomes a bark for kings,
That spreads its purple sails to catch the sun
Lighting it eastward on its stately way.
Feel'st thou the Western breeze that creeps behind us,
Flecking with foam from tiny waterfalls
The swelling bosom of the blue South seas,
And showering diamonds on us? Dost thou not feel it?
And we, reclining here on cloth of gold,
In blissful certitude of what must be,
Do scan the distance that divides us twain . . .
Thou knowest well from what! . . . For thou hast seen
The fair green island, where the birch bends down,
Bathing its branches in the azure flood —
Thou hearest the glad song of all Spring's choirs,
Waiting to welcome us . . .

RAUTENDELEIN. Yes! Yes! I hear it!

HEINRICH [*collapsing*]. So be it. I am ready. When I awake,
A voice shall say to me — Come thou with me.
Then fades the light! . . . Here now the air grows chill.
The seer dies, as the blind man had died.
But I have seen thee . . . seen . . . thee . . . !

RAUTENDELEIN [*with incantations*].
Master, sleep is thine!
When thou wakest, thou art mine.
Happy dreams shall dull thy pain,
Help to make thee whole again.
[*She bustles about by the hearth*]
Hidden treasures, now grow bright!
In the depths ye give no light.
Glowing hounds in vain do bark,
Whine and whimper in the dark!
We, who serve him, glad will be:
For the Master sets us free!
[*Addressing* HEINRICH, *and with gestures*]
One, two, three. A new man be!
For the future thou art free!

HEINRICH [*awaking*]. What's happened to me? . . . From what wondrous sleep
Am I aroused? . . . What is this glorious sun

That, streaming through the window, gilds my hand?
O, breath of morning! Heaven, if 'tis thy will —
If 'tis thy strength that rushes through my veins —
If, as a token of thy power, I feel
This strange, new, beating heart within my breast?
Then, should I rise again — again I'd long
To wander out into the world of life:
And wish, and strive, and hope, and dare, and do . . .
And do . . . and do . . . !
[RAUTENDELEIN *has meanwhile moved to left and stands, leaning against the wall, gazing fixedly at* HEINRICH. *A dazzling light falls on her face. Enter* MAGDA]
Ah, Magda. Is it thou?
MAGDA. Is he awake?
HEINRICH. Yes, Magda. Is it thou?
MAGDA [*delightedly*]. How is it with thee?
HEINRICH [*overcome with emotion*]. Well. Ah, well! I'll live!
I feel it. I shall live . . . Yes! I shall . . . live!
[*As he speaks, he gazes fixedly, not at* MAGDA *but at* RAUTENDELEIN, *who stands in an elfin attitude, looking toward him, with an unnatural light on her face*]
MAGDA [*overjoyed and embracing* HEINRICH, *who seems unconscious of her presence*]. He lives! He lives! O dearest Heinrich! Dearest!

ACT III

A deserted glass-works in the mountains, near the snow fields. Left, an earthenware pipe, through which water from the natural rock runs into a natural stone trough. Right, a "practicable" smith's forge, with chimney and bellows. Through the open entrance to the glass-works at back, right, is seen a mountain landscape, with peaks, moors, and dense fir-woods. Close to the entrance is a precipitous descending slope. In the roof is an outlet for the smoke. Left, the rock forms a rude, pointed vault.

DISCOVERED: THE WOOD-SPRITE. *After throwing a stump on a heap of pine-wood outside, he enters, reluctantly, and looks round.* THE NICKELMANN *rises from the water-trough, remaining immersed up to his breast.*

THE NICKELMANN. Brekekekex! Come in!
THE WOOD-SPRITE. Ah, there thou art!
THE NICKELMANN. Ay. Plague upon this nasty smoke and soot!
THE WOOD-SPRITE. Have they gone out?
THE NICKELMANN. Have who gone out?
THE WOOD-SPRITE. Why — they.
THE NICKELMANN. Yes. I suppose so. Else they would be here.
THE WOOD-SPRITE. I've seen old Horny.
THE NICKELMANN. Ugh!
THE WOOD-SPRITE. . . . With saw and axe.
THE NICKELMANN. What did he say?
THE WOOD-SPRITE. He said . . . thou croakedst much.
THE NICKELMANN. Then let the booby keep his ears closed tight.
THE WOOD-SPRITE. And then he said . . . thou quackedst dismally.
THE NICKELMANN. I'll wring his neck for him.
THE WOOD-SPRITE. And serve him right!
THE NICKELMANN. More necks than one I'd wring —
THE WOOD-SPRITE [*laughing*]. Accursèd wight!
He crowds us from our hills. He hacks and hews,
Digs up our metals, sweats, and smelts, and brews.
The earth-man and the water-sprite he takes
To drag his burdens, and, to harness, breaks.
Our fairest elf's his sweetheart. As for us,
We must stand by, and watch them — as they buss.
She steals my cherished flowers, my red-brown ores,
My gold, my precious stones, my resinous stores.
She serves him like a slave, by night and day.
'Tis him she kisses — us she keeps at bay.
Naught stands against him. Ancient trees he fells.

The earth quakes at his tread, and all the dells
Ring with the echo of his thunderous blows.
His crimson smithy furnace glows and shines
Into the depths of my most secret mines.
What he is up to; only Satan knows!

THE NICKELMANN. Brekekekex! Hadst thou the creature slain,
A-rotting in the mere log since he had lain —
The maker of the bell, beside the bell.
And so when next I had wished to throw the stones,
The bell had been my box — the dice, his bones!

THE WOOD-SPRITE. By cock and pie! That truly, had been well.

THE NICKELMANN. But, as it is, he's hale and strong, and works.
Each hammer-stroke my marrow thrills and irks.

[*Whimpering*]

He makes her rings, and chains, and bracelets rare —
Kisses her neck, her breast, her golden hair.

THE WOOD-SPRITE. Now, by my goaty face, thou must be crazed.
An old chap whine and whimper? I'm amazed.
He has a fancy for the child? What then?
'Tis plain she does not love you watermen.
Cheer up! Although she shall not be thy bride,
The sea is deep: the earth is long and wide.
Catch some fair nixey, and your passion slake.
Live like a pacha: riot — be a rake!
Soon thou'lt be cured: and when they hie to bed,
Thou wilt not even turn to wag thy head.

THE NICKELMANN. I'll have his blood, I say! . . .

THE WOOD-SPRITE. She dotes on him.
Thou'rt powerless.

THE NICKELMANN. I'll tear him limb from limb!

THE WOOD-SPRITE. She will not have thee, and thy rage is vain.
While Granny stands his friend, thy cries of pain
Will all be wasted. Ay, this loving pair
Is closely guarded. Patience! and beware!

THE NICKELMANN. Patience? I hate the word!

THE WOOD-SPRITE. Time runs on fast:
And men are men. Their passion is soon past.

RAUTENDELEIN [*heard singing without*]. A beetle sat in a tree!
Zum! Zum!
A coat all black and white had he!
Zum! Zum!

[*She enters*]

Oho! We've company. Godden, Godden to you.
Hast washed that gold for me, good Nickelmann?
Hast brought the pine-stumps, as I ordered thee,
Dear Goat's-Foot? . . . See: I bend beneath the weight
Of the rare treasures I have found today.
Oh, I'm no laggard when I set to work!
Here I have diamonds: here, crystals clear.
This little bag is filled with gold-dust. Look!
And here is honeycomb . . . How warm it grows!

THE NICKELMANN. Warm days are followed by still warmer nights.

RAUTENDELEIN. Maybe. Cold water is thine element:
So get thee whence thou cam'st, and cool thyself.

[*The* WOOD-SPRITE *laughs*]

[*The* NICKELMANN *sinks silently down into his trough and disappears*]

He will not stop until he's angered me.

THE WOOD-SPRITE [*still laughing*]. 'Ods bobs!

RAUTENDELEIN. My garter's twisted at the knee!
It cuts me. Oh!

THE WOOD-SPRITE. Shall I untwist it, dear?

RAUTENDELEIN. A pretty page thou'dst make! . . . No. Go away.
Thou bring'st ill smells with thee . . . and oh, the gnats!
Why, they are swarming round thee now, in clouds.

THE WOOD-SPRITE. I love them better than the butterflies
That flap their dusty wings about thy face,
Now hanging on thy lips — now on thy hair,

Or clinging to thy hip and breast at night

RAUTENDELEIN [*laughing*]. There! That will do. Enough!

THE WOOD-SPRITE. A happy thought!

Give me this cart-wheel. How did it come here?

RAUTENDELEIN. That thou couldst answer best, thou mischievous rogue.

THE WOOD-SPRITE. Had I not broken down the dray, I trow,

Thy falcon were not now meshed in thy net.

So give me thanks — and let me take the thing.

I'll have it tied with ropes, and smeared with pitch,

And when it's lighted, I will roll it down

The steepest hillside. Ah! That were a joke!

RAUTENDELEIN. Not for the village-folk. Their huts would flame.

THE WOOD-SPRITE. The flame of sacrifice! The red, red wind!

RAUTENDELEIN. But I'll not hear of it. So — get thee gone!

THE WOOD-SPRITE. Thou'rt in a hurry? . . . Must I really go?

Then tell me first — what is the Master doing?

RAUTENDELEIN. He's working a great work!

THE WOOD-SPRITE. Ah, yes, no doubt!

We know how bells are cast: by day

Ye work — at night, ye kiss and play.

Hill pines for dale, dale pines for hill,

Then, quick, the Master works his will:

A bastard thing, half brute, half God —

The pride of Earth — to Heaven a clod.

Come to the hazelwoods with me!

What he could be to thee, I'll be.

To honor thee shall be my pleasure —

Ape not the Virgin pure, my treasure!

RAUTENDELEIN. Thou beast! Thou rogue! I'll blind thy thankless eyes,

Should'st thou not cease that Master to despise

Whose hammer, clanging through the dark, long night,

Strikes to redeem thee! . . . For, without his might,

Thou, I, and all of our unhappy race

Are curst, and kept beyond the pale of grace.

Yet, stay! . . . Be what thou wilt, thy strength is vain.

Here he, the Master, and his will, must reign!

THE WOOD-SPRITE. What's that to me? . . . My greeting to thy love.

Some day, thou'lt see, I'll be thy turtle-dove.

[*Exit laughing. Short pause*]

RAUTENDELEIN. What ails me? . . . Here the air seems close and warm.

I'll hie to some cool grot beside the snow.

The dripping water, green and cold as ice,

Will soon refresh me . . . To-day I trod on a snake,

As it lay sunning itself on a green stone.

It bit at me — up yonder by the falls.

Heigho! How close it is! . . . Steps! . . . Hark! Who comes?

[*Enter the* VICAR, *in mountain costume. He pants for breath as he stands outside the door*]

THE VICAR. Ho! Master Barber! Follow me. This way!

The road was rough. But here I stand, at last.

Well, well. I've come to do God's own good work.

My pains will be repaid a hundred-fold

If, like the Blessèd Shepherd, I should find

One poor, lost sheep, and bring him safely home.

So, courage! Courage! [*He enters*] Is there no one here?

[*He sees* RAUTENDELEIN]

Ah, there thou art. I might have known as much!

RAUTENDELEIN [*pale and angry*]. What do you seek?

THE VICAR. That thou shalt quickly learn.

Ay, soon enough, as God shall be my witness.

Give me but time to get my breath again

And dry my face a bit. And now, my child —

I pray thee, tell me — art thou here alone?

RAUTENDELEIN. Thou hast no right to question me!

THE VICAR. Oho!

A pretty answer, truly. But thou art frank —

Thou showest me thy very self at once.

So much the better. Now my course is plain.

Thou creature! . . .

RAUTENDELEIN. Man, beware!

THE VICAR [*folding his hands and approaching her*]. I fear thee not!

My heart is pure and true. Thou canst not harm me.
He who did give my poor old limbs the strength
To brave thee in thy hidden mountain home
Will not forsake me now. Thou devilish thing,
Think not to daunt me with thy scornful glance —
Waste thy infernal witchcraft not on me!
Thou — thou hast lured him hither — to thy hills!

RAUTENDELEIN. Whom?

THE VICAR. Whom? Why, Master Heinrich. Canst thou ask?
With magic spells, and sweet unhallowed draughts,
Thou hast witched him, till he obeys thee like a dog.
A man so upright, pious to the core;
A father and a husband! Thou great God!
This mountain trull had but to raise her hand
And, in a trice, she had tied him to her skirts,
Dragged him away with her, where'er she pleased,
Shaming the honor of all Christendom.

RAUTENDELEIN. If I'm a robber, 'twas not thou I robbed!

THE VICAR. What! 'Tis not I thou hast robbed? Thou insolent jade,
Not me alone, not only his wife and boys —
No — all mankind thou hast cheated of this man!

RAUTENDELEIN [*suddenly transformed and in triumph*].
Ah, look before thee! See who comes this way!
Dost thou not hear the free and even sound
Of his firm footsteps? Shall thy slan-d'rous flouts
Not even now be turned to joyous shouts?
Dost thou not feel my Balder's conqu'ring glance
Dart through thy soul, and stir thee, as the dance?
The grass his foot treads down is proud and glad.
A King draws nigh! Thou, beggarly wretch, art sad?
Hail! Hail! O Master, Master! Thee I greet!

[*She runs to meet* HEINRICH, *and throws herself into his arms as he enters*]

[HEINRICH *is attired in a picturesque working costume. In his hand he holds a hammer. He enters hand in hand with* RAUTENDELEIN, *and recognizes the* VICAR]

HEINRICH. Welcome! Thrice welcome, friend!

THE VICAR. Now God be praised!
Belovèd Master: is it yourself I see?
You, who but lately came so near to death,
Now stand before me, beaming with rude strength,
Straight as a stout young beech, and hale and well —
You, who did seem a sickly, tottering man,
Hopeless, and aging? What has wrought this change?
How, in a moment, has the grace of God,
With but a puff of His all-quickening breath,
Helped you to spring from your sick-bed to life,
Ready to dance, as David danced, and sing,
Praising the Lord, your Saviour and your King!

HEINRICH. 'Tis even as you say.

THE VICAR. You are a marvel!

HEINRICH. That also is true. In all my frame I feel
Wonders are being worked.
[*To* RAUTENDELEIN]
Go thou, my dear.
The Vicar must be thirsty. Bring some wine.

THE VICAR. I thank you. But — I will not drink to-day.

HEINRICH. Go. Bring the wine. I'll vouch for it. 'Tis good.
Well — as you please. I pray you, do not stand,
This is my first encounter with a friend
Since I released myself from the distress
And shame that sickness brings. I had not hoped
To welcome you, before all others, here —
Within the narrow sphere that bounds my work.
Now am I doubly glad: for now 'tis clear
You have learned what strength, and love, and duty mean.
I see you breaking, with one resolute blow,
The murderous chains of worldly interest —

Fleeing mankind, to seek the one true God.

THE VICAR. Now, God be thanked! You are the old, true Heinrich.

They lied, who, in the valley, had proclaimed
You were no more the man that once we knew.

HEINRICH. That man am I, and yet . . . another man.

Open the windows — Light and God stream in!

THE VICAR. A goodly saying.

HEINRICH. Ay. The best I know.

THE VICAR. I know some better. Yet your saying's good.

HEINRICH. Then, if you are ready, give me your right hand.

I swear, by Cock and Swan and Head of Horse,
With all my soul to serve you as your friend.
I'll open to you wide the gates of Spring —
The Spring that fills my heart.

THE VICAR. Do as you say.
'Twill not be the first time. You know me well.

HEINRICH. I know you. Yes. And though I knew you not,
Yea, though a vulgar soul your face should hide,
So boundless is my craving to do good,
That I ——. Enough. Gold always will be gold.
And even on the souls of sycophants
Good seed's not wasted.

THE VICAR. Master, tell me this:
What was the meaning of your curious oath?

HEINRICH. By Cock and Swan?

THE VICAR. Ay; and by Head of Horse?

HEINRICH. I know not how the words came to my lips . . .
Methinks . . . the weathercock on your church steeple —
The horse's head upon your neighbor's roof —
The swan that soared into the bright blue sky —
Or . . . something else — was in my mind just then.
What does it matter? . . . Ah, here comes the wine.
Now, in the deepest sense of every word,
I drink to our good health . . . yours . . . thine . . . and mine.

THE VICAR. I thank you: and once more I wish good health
To him who has so wondrously been healed.

HEINRICH [*pacing to and fro*]. Yes. I am healed — indeed. I feel it here —
Here, in my breast, that swells as I draw in
Strength and new rapture with each living breath.
It is as though the very youth of May
Gladdened my heart and streamed into my being.
I feel it in my arm — 'tis hard as steel;
And in my hand, that, as the eagle's claw,
Clutches at empty air, and shuts again,
Wild with impatience to achieve great deeds.
Saw you the sanctuary in my garden?

THE VICAR. What do you mean?

HEINRICH. There! . . . 'Tis another marvel.
Look!

THE VICAR. I see nothing.

HEINRICH. I mean yonder tree,
That seems so like a glowing evening-cloud.
For the god Freyr once rested in its boughs.
From its green branches, and from round its stem,
Comes the voluptuous hum of countless bees —
Hark how they buzz and swarm about the flowers
Eager to sip sweet draughts from every bud!
I feel that I am like that wondrous tree . . .
Even as he came down into those boughs,
So did the god descend into my soul,
And, in an instant, it was all a-bloom.
If any bees go thirsting, let them suck!

THE VICAR. Go on, go on, my friend. I love to listen.
You and your blossoming tree indeed may boast.
Whether your fruit shall ripen, rests with God!

HEINRICH. Surely, dear friend. Does He not order all?
He hurled me down the precipice. 'Twas He
Who raised me up and caused my life to bloom.
He made the fruit, and flowers, and all that grows.
Yet — pray that He may bless my newborn Summer!

What's germed within me's worthy of the blessing —
Worthy of ripening: really and indeed.
It is a work like none I had yet conceived;
A chime, of all the noblest metals wrought,
That, of itself, shall ring and, ringing, live.
If I but put my hand up to my ear,
Straightway I hear it sing. I close my eyes —
Form after form at once grows palpable.
Behold! What now is freely given to me,
Of old — when ye were wont to acclaim me "Master" —
In nameless agony, I vainly sought.
I was no Master then, nor was I happy.
Now am I both; I am happy and a Master!

THE VICAR. I love to hear men call you by that name.
Yet it seems strange that you yourself should do so.
For what church are you making your great work?

HEINRICH. For no church.

THE VICAR. Then — who ordered it, my friend?

HEINRICH. He who commanded yonder pine to rise
In strength and majesty beside the abyss! . . .
But — seriously: the little church you had built
Lies half in ruins — half it has been burned.
So I must find a new place on the heights:
A new place, for a new, a nobler, temple!

THE VICAR. O Master, Master! . . . But, I will not argue.
Perchance we have misunderstood each other.
To put things plainly, what I mean is this:
As your new work must cost so very dear . . .

HEINRICH. Yes. It is costly.

THE VICAR. Such a chime as yours . . .

HEINRICH. Oh, call it what you will.

THE VICAR. You said — a chime?

HEINRICH. A name I gave to that which none may name,
Nor can, nor shall baptize, except itself.

THE VICAR. And tell me, pray — who pays you for your work?

HEINRICH. Who pays me for my work? Oh, Father! Father!
Would you give joy to joy — add gold to gold? . . .
If I so named it, and the name you love —
Call my great work — a chime! . . . But 'tis a chime
Such as no minster in the world has seen.
Loud and majestic is its mighty voice.
Even as the thunder of a storm it sounds,
Rolling and crashing o'er the meads in Spring.
Ay, in the tumult of its trumpet-tones,
All the church-bells on earth it shall strike dumb.
All shall be hushed, as through the sky it rings
The glad new Gospel of the new-born light!
. . . . . .
Eternal Sun![1] Thy children, and my children,
Know thee for Father, and proclaim thy power.
Thou, aided by the kind and gentle rain,
Didst raise them from the dust and give them health!
So now — their joy triumphant they shall send
Singing along thy clear, bright, path to Heaven!
And now, at last, like the grey wilderness
That thou hast warmed, and mantled with thy green,
Me thou hast kindled into sacrifice!
I offer thee myself, and all I am! . . .
O Day of Light — when, from the marble halls
Of my fair Temple, the first waking peal
Shall shake the skies — when, from the sombre clouds
That weighed upon us through the winter night,
Rivers of jewels shall go rushing down
Into a million hands outstretched to clutch!
Then all who drooped, with sudden power inflamed,
Shall bear their treasure homeward to their huts,
There to unfurl, at last, the silken banners,
Waiting — so long, so long — to be upraised,
And, pilgrims of the Sun, draw near the Feast!
. . . . . .

[1] In the German the Sun is feminine. The original passage has consequently been modified.

O, Father, that great Day! . . . You know the tale
Of the lost Prodigal? . . . It is the Sun
That bids his poor, lost children to my Feast.
With rustling banners, see the swelling host
Draw nearer, and still nearer to my Temple.
And now the wondrous chime again rings out,
Filling the air with such sweet, passionate sound
As makes each breast to sob with rapturous pain.
It sings a song, long lost and long forgotten,
A song of home — a childlike song of Love,
Born in the waters of some fairy well —
Known to all mortals, and yet heard of none!
And as it rises, softly first, and low,
The nightingale and dove seem singing, too;
And all the ice in every human breast
Is melted, and the hate, and pain, and woe,
Stream out in tears.

. . . . . .

Then shall we all draw nearer to the Cross,
And, still in tears, rejoice, until at last
The dead Redeemer, by the Sun set free,
His prisoned limbs shall stir from their long sleep,
And, radiant with the joy of endless youth,
Come down, Himself a youth, into the May!

[HEINRICH'S *enthusiasm has swelled as he has spoken the foregoing speech, till at last it has become ecstatic. He walks to and fro.* RAUTENDELEIN, *who has been silently watching him all this time, showing her love and adoration by the changing expression of her face, now approaches* HEINRICH, *with tears in her eyes, kneels beside him, and kisses his hand. The* VICAR *has listened to* HEINRICH *with growing pain and horror. Towards the end of* HEINRICH'S *speech he has contained himself with difficulty. After a brief pause he answers. At first he speaks with enforced calm. Gradually, however, his feeling carries him away*]

THE VICAR. And now, dear Master, I have heard you out:
Now every syllable those worthy men
Had told me of your state, alas, is proved.
Yea, even to the story of this chime of bells.
I cannot tell you all the pain I feel! . . .
A truce to empty words! If here I stand,
'Tis not because I thirsted for your marvels.
No! 'Tis to help you in your hour of need!

HEINRICH. My need? . . . And so you think I am in need?

THE VICAR. Man! Man! Bestir yourself. Awake! You dream!
A dreadful dream, from which you'll surely wake
To everlasting sorrow. Should I fail
To rouse you, with God's wise and holy words,
You are lost, ay, lost for ever, Master Heinrich!

HEINRICH. I do not think so.

THE VICAR. What saith the Good Book? [1]
"Those whom He would destroy, He first doth blind."

HEINRICH. If God so willed it — you'd resist in vain.
Yet, should I own to blindness,
Filled as I feel myself with pure, new life,
Bedded upon a glorious morning cloud,
Whence with new eyes I drink in all the heavens;
Why, then, indeed, I should deserve God's curse,
And endless Darkness.

THE VICAR. Master Heinrich — — friend,
I am too humble to keep pace with you.
A simple man am I — a child of Earth:
The superhuman lies beyond my grasp.
But one thing I do know, though you forget,
That wrong is never right, nor evil, good.

HEINRICH. And Adam did not know so much in Eden!

THE VICAR. Fine phrases, sounding well, but meaningless.
They will not serve to cloak your deadly sin.
It grieves me sore — I would have spared you this.

[1] So it stands in the original.

You have a wife, and children . . .
HEINRICH. Well — what more?
THE VICAR. You shun the church,
take refuge in the mountains;
This many a month you have not seen
the home
Where your poor wife sits sighing, while,
each day,
Your children drink their lonely
mother's tears!
[*A long pause*]
HEINRICH [*with emotion*]. Could I but
wipe away those sorrowful tears,
How gladly would I do it! . . . But I
cannot.
In my dark hours, I've digged into my
soul,
Only to feel, I have no power to dry
them.
I, who am now all love, in love re-
newed,
Out of the overflowing wealth I own,
May not fill up their cup! For, lo, my
wine
Would be to them but bitter gall and
venom!
Should he whose hand is as the eagle's
claw
Stroke a sick child's wet cheek? . . .
Here none but God
Could help!
THE VICAR. For this there is no
name but madness,
And wicked madness. Yes. I speak
the truth.
Here stand I, Master, overcome with
horror
At the relentless cruelty of your heart.
Now Satan, aping God, hath dealt a
blow —
Yes, I must speak my mind — a blow so
dread
That even he must marvel at his
triumph.
That work, Almighty God, whereof he
prates —
Do I not know 't? . . . 'Tis the most
awful crime
Ever was hatched within a heathen
brain!
Far rather would I see the dreadful
plagues
Wherewith the Lord once scourged
rebellious Egypt
Threaten our Christendom, than watch
your Temple
Rise to the glory of Beelzebub.
Awake! Arise! Come back, my son,
to Christ!
It is not yet too late! Cast out this
witch!
Renounce this wanton hag — ay, cast
her out!
This elf, this sorceress, this cursèd sprite!
Then in a trice, the evil spell shall fade
And vanish into air. You shall be
saved!
HEINRICH. What time I fevered lay,
a prey to death,
She came, and raised me up, and made
me well.
THE VICAR. 'Twere better you had
died — than live like this!
HEINRICH. Why, as to that, think
even as you will.
But, as for me — I took life's burden
up.
I live anew, and, till death comes, must
thank
Her who did give me life.
THE VICAR. Now — I have done!
Too deep, yea to the neck, you are sunk
in sin!
Your Hell, decked out in beauty as high
Heaven,
Shall hold you fast. I will not waste
more words.
Yet mark this, Master: witches make
good fuel,
Even as heretics, for funeral-pyres.
Vox populi, vox Dei! Your ill deeds,
Heathen, and secret once, are now laid
bare.
Horror they wake, and soon there shall
come hate.
So it may happen that the storm, long-
curbed,
All bounds shall overleap, and that the
people
Whom you have outraged in their holiest
faith,
Shall rise against you in their own de-
fence,
And crush you ruthlessly!
[*Pause*]
HEINRICH [*calmly*]. And now hear
me . . .
I fear you not! . . . Should they who
panting lie
Dash from my hand the cup of cooling
wine
I bore to them: if they would rather
thirst —
Why, then, it is their will — perhaps
their fate —
And none may justly charge me with
their act.
I am no longer thirsty. I have drunk.
If it is fitting that, of all men, you —
Who have closed your eyes against the
truth — should be
That man who now assails so hatefully

The blameless cup-bearer, and flings the mud
Of Darkness 'gainst his soul, where all is light:
Yet I am I! . . . What I would work, I know.
And if, ere now, full many a faulty bell
My stroke has shattered, once again will I
Swing my great hammer, for a mightier blow,
Dealt at another bell the mob has made —
Fashioned of malice, gall, and all ill things,
Last but not least among them ignorance.
THE VICAR. Then, go your way! Farewell. My task is done.
The hemlock of your sin no man may hope
To rid your soul of. May God pity you!
But this remember! There's a word named rue!
And some day, some day, as your dreams you dream,
A sudden arrow, shot from out the blue,
Shall pierce your breast! And yet you shall not die,
Nor shall you live. In that dread day you'll curse
All you now cherish — God, the world, your work,
Your wretched self you'll curse. Then . . . think of me!
HEINRICH. Had I a fancy to paint phantoms, Vicar,
I'd be more skilful in the art than you.
The things you rave of never shall come true,
And I am guarded well against your arrow.
No more it frets me, nor my heart can shake,
Than that old bell, which in the water rolled —
Where it lies buried now, and hushed — forever!
THE VICAR. That bell shall toll again! Then think of me!

ACT IV

SCENE: *The glass-works as in Act Three. A rude door has been hewn out of the rocky wall, left. Through this, access is obtained to a mountain-cave. Right, the open forge, with bellows and chimney. The fire is lighted. Near the forge stands an anvil.*

DISCOVERED: HEINRICH, *at the anvil, on which he is laying a bar of red-hot iron which he holds tight with his tongs. Near him stand six little* DWARFS *attired as mountaineers. The* FIRST DWARF *holds the tongs with* HEINRICH; *the* SECOND DWARF *lifts the great forge hammer and brings it down with a ringing blow on the iron. The* THIRD DWARF *works the bellows. The* FOURTH DWARF *stands motionless, intently watching the progress of the work. The* FIFTH DWARF *stands by, waiting. In his hand he holds a club, ready to strike. The* SIXTH DWARF *sits perched on the stump of a tree. On his head he wears a glittering crown. Here and there lie fragments of forged iron and castings, models and plans.*

HEINRICH [*to* SECOND DWARF]. Strike hard! Strike harder! Till thy arm hangs limp.
Thy whimpering does not move me, thou poor sluggard —
Shouldst thou relax before the time I set,
I'll singe thy beard for thee in these red flames.
[SECOND DWARF *throws his hammer down*]
Oho! 'Tis as I thought. Well, wait, thou imp!
And thou shalt see I mean what I have threaten'd!
[SECOND DWARF *struggles and screams as* HEINRICH *holds him over the fire.* THIRD DWARF *goes to work more busily than ever at the bellows*]
FIRST DWARF [*with the tongs*]. I can't hold on. My hand is stiff, great Master!
HEINRICH. I'm coming.
[*He turns to* SECOND DWARF]
Well, dost thou feel stronger now?
[SECOND DWARF *nods reassuringly, and hammers away for dear life*]
HEINRICH. By Cock and Swan! I'll have no mercy on you!
[*He clutches the tongs again*]
No blacksmith living could a horseshoe shape
An he should stand on trifles with such rogues.
No sooner have they struck the first good stroke
When off they'd go, and leave the rest to chance.
And as for counting on them for the zeal

That spurs an honest workman to attempt
Ten thousand miracles — why, 'twould be mad.
To work! To work! Hot iron bends — not cold!
[*To* First Dwarf]
What art thou at?
First Dwarf [*busily trying to mould the red-hot iron with his hand*]. I'm moulding it with my hand.
Heinrich. Thou reckless fool. What? Hast thou lost thy wits?
Wouldst thou reduce thy clumsy paw to ashes?
Thou wretched dwarf, if thou shouldst fail me now,
What power had I? . . . Without thy helping art,
How could I hope to see my cherished work
Rise from the summit of my temple towers
Into the free and sunlit air of heaven?
First Dwarf. The iron is well forged. The hand is whole —
Deadened and numbed a little: that is all.
Heinrich. Off to the well with thee! The Nickelmann
Will cool thy fingers with his water-weeds.
[*To the* Second Dwarf]
Now take the rest thou'st earned, thou lazy imp,
And make the most of it. I'll comfort seek
In the reward that comes of honest effort.
[*He picks up the newly forged iron, sits, and examines it*]
Ah, here's rare work for you! The kindly powers
Have crowned our labor with this good result.
I am content. Methinks I have cause to be,
Since, out of shapelessness, a shape has grown,
And, out of chaos, this rare masterpiece:
Nicely proportioned — here . . . above . . . below . . .
Just what was needed to complete the work.
[*The* Fourth Dwarf *clambers on to a stool and whispers in* Heinrich's *ear*]
What art thou muttering, imp? Disturb me not,
Lest I should tie thy hands and feet together,
And clap a gag into thy chattering throat!
[Dwarf *retreats in alarm*]
What's out of joint in the great scheme? What's wrong?
What irks thee? Speak when thou art questioned, dwarf!
Never as now was I so filled with joy;
Never were heart and hand more surely one.
What art thou grumbling at? Am I not Master?
Wouldst thou, poor hireling, dare to vie with me?
Well — out with it! Thy meaning — Speak! Be plain!
[Dwarf *returns and whispers.* Heinrich *turns pale, sighs, rises, and angrily lays the iron on the anvil*]
Then may the Devil end this work himself!
I'll grow potatoes, and plant cabbages.
I'll eat and drink and sleep, and then — I'll die!
[Fifth Dwarf *approaches the anvil*]
Thou, fellow, do not dare to lay thy hand on 't!
Ay, burst with fury, an thou wilt. I care not.
And let thy hair stand straight on end — thy glance
Dart death. Thou rogue! Who yields but once to thee,
Or fails to hold thee tightly in his clutch,
Might just as well bow down and be thy slave,
And wait till, with thy club, thou end his pain!
[Fifth Dwarf *angrily shatters the iron on the anvil;* Heinrich *grinds his teeth with rage*]
Well, well! Run riot! No more work to-night.
A truce to duty. Get ye hence, ye dwarfs!
Should morning, as I hope, put fresh, new life
Into this frame of mine — I'll call ye back.
Go! — Work unbidden would avail me naught.
[*To* Third Dwarf]
Come — drop thy bellows, dwarf. With all thy might,
Thou'dst hardly heat me a new iron to-night.
Away! Away!

[*All the* DWARFS, *with the exception of the one with the crown, vanish through the door left*]

And thou, crowned King, who only once shalt speak —
Why dost thou linger? Get thee gone, I say.
Thou wilt not speak to-day, nor yet to-morrow:
Heaven only knows if thou wilt ever speak!
My work! . . . My work! When will it end! . . . I'm tired!
I love thee not, sad twilight hour, that liest
Pressed 'twixt the dying day and growing night.
Thou wringest from my nerveless hand the hammer,
Yet bring'st me not the sleep, the dreamless sleep,
That gives men rest. A heart athirst for work
Knows it must wait, and wait in idleness:
And so — in pain — it waits . . . for the new day.
The sun, wrapped round in purple, slowly sinks
Into the depths . . . and leaves us here alone.
While we, who are used to light, look helpless on,
And, stripped of everything, must yield to night.
Rags are the coverlets that cloak our sleep.
At noon we're kings . . . at dusk we're only beggars.

[*He throws himself on a couch and lies dreaming, with wide-open eyes. A white mist comes in through the open door. When it disappears, the* NICKELMANN *is discovered leaning over the edge of the water-trough*]

THE NICKELMANN. Quorax! . . . Brekekekex! . . . So there he lies —
This Master Earth-Worm — in his mossgrown house.
He's deaf and blind, while crookback imps do creep
Like the grey mists upon the mountain-side.
Now they uplift their shadowy hands, and threaten!
Now they go wringing them, as though in pain!
He sleeps! He does not heed the moaning pines;
The low, malignant piping of the elves
That makes the oldest fir-trees quake and thrill,
And, like a hen that flaps her foolish wings,
Beat their own boughs against their quivering flanks . . .!
Now, he grows chiller, as the winter-grey
Searches the marrow in his bones. And still,
Even in sleep, he toils!
Give over, fool! Thou canst not fight with God!
'Twas God that raised thee up, to prove thy strength;
And now, since thou art weak, He casts thee down!

[HEINRICH *tosses about and moans in his sleep*]

Vain is thy sacrifice. For Sin is Sin.
Thou hast not wrung from God the right to change
Evil to good — or wages give to guilt.
Thou'rt foul with stains. Thy garments reek with blood.
Now, call thou ne'er so loud, the gentle hand
That might have washed thee clean, thou'lt never see!
Black spirits gather in the hills and dales.
Soon in thine anguished ear the sound shall ring
Of the wild huntsmen and the baying hounds!
They know what game they hunt! . . . And now, behold!
The giant builders of the air upraise
Castles of cloud, with monstrous walls and towers.
Frowning and grim, they move against thy heights,
Eager to crush thy work, and thee, and all!

HEINRICH. Help! Help! Rautendelein! An alp! I choke!

THE NICKELMANN. She hears thee — and she comes — but brings no help!
Though she were Freya, and though thou wert Balder —
Though sun-tipped shafts did fill thy radiant quiver,
And ev'ry shaft that thou shouldst point went home —
Thou must be vanquished. Hear me!

A sunken bell in the deep mere lies,
Under the rocks and the rolling:
And it longs to rise —
In the sunlight again to be tolling!

The fishes swim in, and the fishes swim out,
As the old bell tosses, and rolls about.
It shudders and sways as they come and go,
And weeping is heard, and the sound of woe.
A muffled moan, and a throb of pain,
Answer the swirling flood —
For the mouth of the bell is choked with blood!
Woe, woe, to thee, man, when it tolls again!
Bim! . . . Boom!
The Lord save thee from thy doom!
Bim! . . . Boom!
Hark to the knell!
Death is the burden of that lost bell!
Bim! . . . Boom!
The Lord save thee from thy doom!
[THE NICKELMANN *sinks into the well*]

HEINRICH. Help! Help! A nightmare chokes me! Help! Help! Help!
[*He awakes*]
Where am I? . . . Am I living?
[*He rubs his eyes and looks round him*]
No one here?

RAUTENDELEIN [*entering*]. I'm here! Did'st call?

HEINRICH. Yes! Come! Come here to me.
Lay thy dear hand upon my forehead — so,
And let me stroke thy hair . . . and feel thy heart.
Come. Nearer. In thy train thou bring'st the scent
Of the fresh woods and rosemary. Ah, kiss me!
Kiss me!

RAUTENDELEIN. What ails thee, dearest?

HEINRICH. Nothing, nothing!
Give me a coverlet . . . I lay here chilled . . .
Too tired to work . . . My heart grew faint . . . and then
Dark powers of evil seemed to enter in . . .
Laid hold of me, possessed me, plagued me sore,
And tried to throttle me . . . But now I'm well.
Have thou no fear, child. I'm myself again!
Now let them come!

RAUTENDELEIN. Who?

HEINRICH. Why, my foes.

RAUTENDELEIN. What foes?

HEINRICH. My nameless enemies — ay, one and all!
I stand upon my feet, as once I stood,
Ready to brave them, though they filled my sleep
With crawling, creeping, cowardly terrors!

RAUTENDELEIN. Thou'rt fevered, Heinrich!

HEINRICH. Ay, 'tis chill to-night.
No matter. Put thy arms around me. So.

RAUTENDELEIN. Thou, dearest, dearest!

HEINRICH. Tell me this, my child,
Dost trust in me?

RAUTENDELEIN. Thou Balder! Hero! God!
I press my lips against the fair white brow
That overhangs the clear blue of thine eyes.
[*Pause*]

HEINRICH. So — I am all thou say'st? . . . I am thy Balder?
Make me believe it — make me know it, child!
Give my faint soul the rapturous joy it needs,
To nerve it to its task. For, as the hand,
Toiling with tong and hammer, on and on,
To hew the marble and to guide the chisel,
Now bungles here, now there, yet may not halt,
And nothing, small or great, dare leave to chance,
So do we ofttimes lose our passionate faith,
Feel the heart tighten, and the eyes grow dim,
Till, in the daily round of drudging work,
The clear projection of the soul doth vanish.
For, to preserve that Heaven-sent gift is hard.
No clamp have we, no chain to hold it fast.
'Tis as the aura that surrounds a sun,
Impalpable. That being lost, all's lost.
Defrauded now we stand, and tempted sore
To shirk the anguish that foreruns fruition.
What, in conception, seemed all ecstacy,
Now turns to sorrow. But — enough of this.
Still straight and steady doth the smoke ascend

From my poor human sacrifice to Heaven.
Should now a Hand on high reject my gift,
Why, it may do so. Then the priestly robe
Falls from my shoulder — by no act of mine;
While I, who erst upon the heights was set,
Must look my last on Horeb, and be dumb!
But now bring torches! Lights! And show thine art!
Enchantress! Fill the winecup! We will drink!
Ay, like the common herd of mortal men,
With resolute hands our fleeting joy we'll grip!
Our unsought leisure we will fill with life,
Not waste it, as the herd, in indolence.
We will have music!

RAUTENDELEIN. O'er the hills I flew:
Now, as a cobweb, on the breezes drifting,
Now frolicking as a bee, or butterfly,
And darting hungrily from flower to flower.
From each and all, from every shrub and plant,
Each catch-fly, harebell, and forget-me-not,
I dragged the promise, and I forced the oath,
That bound them never to do harm to thee.
And so — the blackest elf, most bitter foe
To thee, so good and white, should vainly seek
To cut thy death-arrow![1]

HEINRICH. What is this arrow?
I know the spirit! . . . Yes, I know't! . . . There came
A spirit to me once, in priestly garb,
Who, threat'ning, raised his hand, the while he raved
Of some such arrow that should pierce my heart.
Who'll speed the arrow from his bow, I say?
Who — who will dare?

RAUTENDELEIN. Why, no one, dearest. No one.
Thou'rt proof against all ill, I say — thou'rt proof.
And now, blink but thine eye, or only nod,
And gentle strains shall upward float, as mist,
Hem thee about, and, with a wall of music,
Guard thee from call of man, and toll of bell:
Yea, mock at even Loki's mischievous arts.
Make the most trifling gesture with thy hand,
These rocks shall turn to vaulted palace-halls,
Earth-men unnumbered shall buzz round, and stand
Ready to deck the floor, the walls, the board!
Yet — since by dark, fierce foes we are beset,
Wilt thou not flee into the earth with me?
There we need fear no icy giant's breath —
There the vast halls shall shine with dazzling light —

HEINRICH. Peace, child. No more.
What were thy feast to me
So long as solemn, mute, and incomplete,
My work the hour awaits, wherein its voice
Shall loudly usher in the Feast of Feasts! . . .
I'll have one more good look at the great structure.
So shall new fetters bind me to it fast.
Take thou a torch, and light me on my way.
Haste! Haste! . . . Since now I feel my nameless foes
Busy at work to do me injury —
Since now the fabric's menaced at the base —
'Tis meet the Master, too, should toil — not revel.
For, should success his weary labor crown,
The secret wonder stand at last revealed,
In gems and gold expressed, and ivory.
Even to the faintest, feeblest, of its tones —
His work should live, triumphant, through the ages!
'Tis imperfection that draws down the curse,
Which, could we brave it here, we'd make a mock of.
Ay, we will make a mock of 't!
[*He moves to the door and halts*]
Well, child? . .

[1] It was an old belief that dangerous arrows were shot down from the air by elves.

Why dost thou linger! . . . Have I grieved thee?

RAUTENDELEIN. No! No! No!

HEINRICH. What ails thee?

RAUTENDELEIN. Nothing!

HEINRICH. Thou poor soul! I know what grieves thee. — Children, such as thou,
Run lightly after the bright butterflies,
And often, laughing, kill what most they love.
But I am not a butterfly. I am more.

RAUTENDELEIN. And I? Am I a child? . . . No more than that?

HEINRICH. Ay, truly, thou art more! . . . That to forget
Were to forget the brightness of my life.
The dew that glistened in thy shining eyes
Filled me with pain. And then I pained thee, too.
Come! 'Twas my tongue, not I, that hurt thee so.
My heart of hearts knows naught, save only love.
Nay — do not weep so. See — now I am armed;
Thou hast equipped me for the game anew.
Lo, thou hast filled my empty hands with gold;
Given me courage for one more last throw!
Now I can play with Heaven! . . . Ah, and I feel
So blessed, so wrapped in thy strange loveliness —
Yet, when I, wond'ring, seek to grasp it all,
I am baffled. For thy charm's unsearchable.
And then I feel how near joy's kin to pain —
Lead on! And light my path!

THE WOOD-SPRITE [*without*]. Ho! Holdrio!
Up! Up! Bestir yourselves! Plague o' the dawdlers!
The heathen temple must be laid in ashes!
Haste, reverend sir! Haste, Master Barber, haste!
Here there is straw and pitch a-plenty. See!
The Master's cuddling his fair elfin bride —
And while he toys with her, naught else he heeds.

HEINRICH. The deadly nightshade must have made him mad.
What art thou yelling in the night, thou rogue?
Beware!

THE WOOD-SPRITE [*defiantly*]. Of thee?

HEINRICH. Ay, fool. Beware of me!
I know the way to manage such as thou,
I'll grab thee by thy beard, thou misshaped oaf;
Thou shalt be shorn and stripped, and when thou'rt tamed,
When thou hast learned to know who's master here,
I'll make thee work and slave for me — thou goat-shank!
What? . . . Neighing, eh? . . . Dost see this anvil, beast?
And, here, this hammer? It is hard enough
To beat thee to a jelly.

THE WOOD-SPRITE [*turning his back on* HEINRICH *insolently*]. Bah! Hammer away!
Many and many a zealot's flashing sword
Has tickled me, ere it was turned to splinters.
The iron on thy anvil's naught but clay,
And, like a cow's dug, at the touch it bursts.

HEINRICH. We'll see, thou windbag, thou hobgoblin damned!
Wert thou as ancient as the Wester wood,
Or did thy power but match thy braggart tongue —
I'll have thee chained, and make thee fetch and carry,
Sweep, drudge, draw water, roll huge stones and rocks,
And shouldst thou loiter, beast, I'll have thee flayed!

RAUTENDELEIN. Heinrich! He warns thee!

THE WOOD-SPRITE. Ay! Go to! Go to!
'Twill be a mad game when they drag thee hence
And roast thee, like an ox! And I'll be by!
But now to find the brimstone, oil, and pitch,
Wherewith to make a bonfire that shall smoke
Till daylight shall be blotted out in darkness.

[*Exit*]

[*Cries and murmurs of many voices heard from below, without*]

RAUTENDELEIN. Dost thou not hear them, Heinrich? Men are coming!
Hark to their boding cries! . . . They are for thee!

[*A stone flung from without strikes* RAUTENDELEIN]

Help, grandmother!

HEINRICH. So that is what was meant!

I dreamt a pack of hounds did hunt me down.

The hounds I hear. The hunt has not begun!

Their yelping, truly, could not come more pat.

For, though an angel had hung down from Heaven,

All lily-laden, and, with gentle sighs,

Entreated me to steadfastness,

He had convinced me less than those fierce cries

Of the great weight and purport of my mission.

Come one, come all! What's yours I guard for you!

I'll shield you from your selves! . . . That be my watchword!

[*Exit with hammer*]

RAUTENDELEIN [*alone and in excitement*].

Help, help, Bush-Grandmother! Help, Nickelmann!

[THE NICKELMANN *rises from the well*]

Ah, my dear Nickelmann, I beg of you —

Bid water, quick, come streaming from the rocks,

Wave upon wave, and drive them all away!

Do! Do!

THE NICKELMANN. Brekekekex! What shall I do?

RAUTENDELEIN. Let thy wild waters sweep them to the abyss!

THE NICKELMANN. I cannot.

RAUTENDELEIN. But thou canst, good Nickelmann!

THE NICKELMANN. And if I should — what good were that to me?

I have no cause to wish well to the Master.

He'd love to lord it over God and men.

'Twould suit me if the fools should strike him down!

RAUTENDELEIN. Oh, help him — help! Or it will be too late!

THE NICKELMANN. What wilt thou give me, dear?

RAUTENDELEIN. I give thee?

THE NICKELMANN. Yes.

RAUTENDELEIN. Ah, what thou wilt!

THE NICKELMANN. Oho! Brekekekex!

Then strip thy pretty gown from thy brown limbs,

Take off thy crimson shoon, thy dainty cap.

Be what thou art! Come down into my well —

I'll spirit thee a thousand leagues away.

RAUTENDELEIN. Forsooth! How artfully he'd made his plans!

But now I tell thee once, and once for all;

Thou'dst better clear thy pate of all thy schemes.

For, shouldst thou live to thrice thy hoary age —

Shouldst thou grow old as Granny — shouldst thou forever

Prison me close in thine own oyster shells,

I would not look at thee!

THE NICKELMANN. Then . . . he must die.

RAUTENDELEIN. Thou liest! . . . I'm sure of 't. Thou liest! Hark!

Ah, well thou knowest his clear-sounding voice!

Dost think I do not see thee shrink in fear?

[THE NICKELMANN *disappears in the well*]

[*Enter* HEINRICH *in triumph, and flushed with the excitement of the strife. He laughs*]

HEINRICH. They came at me like hounds, and, even as hounds,

I drove them from me with the flaming brands!

Great boulders then I rolled upon their heads:

Some perished — others fled! Come — give me drink!

War cools the breast — 'tis steeled by victory.

The warm blood rushes through my veins. Once more

My pulse throbs joyously. War does not tire.

War gives a man the strength of twenty men,

And hate and love makes new!

RAUTENDELEIN. Here, Heinrich. Drink!

HEINRICH. Yes, give it me, my child. I am athirst

For wine, and light, and love, and joy, and thee!

[*He drinks*]

I drink to thee, thou airy elfin sprite!

And, with this drink, again I thee do wed.

Without thee, my invention would be clogged,

I were a prey to gloom — world-weariness.
My child, I entreat thee, do not fail me now.
Thou art the very pinion of my soul.
Fail not my soul!

RAUTENDELEIN. Ah, do not thou fail me!

HEINRICH. That God forbid! . . . Ho! Music!

RAUTENDELEIN. Hither! Hither! Come hither, little people! Elves and gnomes!
Come! Help us to make merry! Leave your homes!
Tune all your tiny pipes, and harps, and flutes,

[*Faint elfin music heard without*]

And watch me dance responsive to your lutes!
With glowworms, gleaming emerald, lo, I deck
My waving tresses and my dainty neck.
So jeweled, and adorned with fairy light,
I'll make e'en Freya's necklace seem less bright!

HEINRICH [*interrupting*]. Be still! . . . Methought . . .

RAUTENDELEIN. What?

HEINRICH. Didst not hear it then?

RAUTENDELEIN. Hear what?

HEINRICH. Why — nothing.

RAUTENDELEIN. Dearest, what is wrong?

HEINRICH. I know not . . . But, commingling with thy music . . .
Methought I heard . . . a strain . . . a sound . . .

RAUTENDELEIN. What sound?

HEINRICH. A plaint . . . a tone . . . a long, long, buried tone . . .
No matter. It was nothing! Sit thou here!
Give me thy rose-red lips. From this fair cup
I'll drink forgetfulness!

[*They kiss. Long and ecstatic pause. Then* HEINRICH *and* RAUTENDELEIN *move, locked in each other's arms, through the doorway*]

See! Deep and cool and monstrous yawns the gulf
That parts us from the world where mortals dwell.
I am a man. Canst understand me, child? . . .
Yonder I am at home . . . and yet a stranger —
Here I am strange . . . and yet I seem at home.
Canst understand?

RAUTENDELEIN. Yes!

HEINRICH. Yet thou eyest me
So wildly. Why?

RAUTENDELEIN. I'm filled with dread — with horror!

HEINRICH. With dread? Of what?

RAUTENDELEIN. Of what? I cannot tell.

HEINRICH. 'Tis nothing. Let us rest.

[HEINRICH *leads* RAUTENDELEIN *towards the doorway in the rocks, left. He stops suddenly, and turns towards the open country*]

Yet may the moon,
That hangs so chalky-white in yonder heavens,
Not shed the still light of her staring eyes
On what's below . . . may she not flood with brightness
The valley whence I rose to these lone heights!
For what lies hid beneath that pall of grey
I dare not gaze on! . . . Hark! Child! Didst hear nothing?

RAUTENDELEIN. Nothing! And what thou saidst was dark to me!

HEINRICH. What! Dost thou still not hear't?

RAUTENDELEIN. What should I hear? —
The night wind playing on the heath, I hear —
I hear the cawing of the carrion-kite —
I hear thee, strangely uttering strange, wild words,
In tones that seem as though they were not thine!

HEINRICH. There! There! Below . . . where shines the wicked moon
Look! Yonder! — Where the light gleams on the waters!

RAUTENDELEIN. Nothing I see! Nothing!

HEINRICH. With thy gerfalcon eyes
Thou seest naught? Art blind? What drags its way
Slowly and painfully along . . . There . . . See!

RAUTENDELEIN. Thy fancy cheats thee!

HEINRICH. No! . . . It was no cheat,
As God shall pardon me! . . . Peace! Peace! I say!
Now it climbs over the great boulder, yonder —
Down by the footpath . . .

RAUTENDELEIN. Heinrich! Do not look!
I'll close the doors and rescue thee by force!
HEINRICH. No! Let me be! . . . I must look down! I will!
RAUTENDELEIN. See — how the fleecy clouds whirl round and round,
As in a giant cauldron, 'mid the rocks!
Weak as thou art, beware! Go not too near!
HEINRICH. I am not weak! . . . 'Twas fancy. Now 'tis gone!
RAUTENDELEIN. That's well! Now be once more our Lord and Master!
Shall wretched visions so undo thy strength?
No! Take thy hammer! Swing it wide and high! . . .
HEINRICH. Dost thou not see them, where they climb and climb? . . .
RAUTENDELEIN. Where?
HEINRICH. There! . . . Now they have reached the rocky path . . .
Clad only in their little shirts they come!
RAUTENDELEIN. Who come?
HEINRICH. Two little lads, with bare, white feet.
They hold an urn between them . . . 'Tis so heavy!
Now one, and now the other, bends his knee . . .
His little, baby knee, to raise it up . . .
RAUTENDELEIN. Oh, help him, mother — help him in his need!
HEINRICH. A halo shines about their tiny heads . . .
RAUTENDELEIN. Some will-o'-the-wisp!
HEINRICH. No! . . . Kneel, and clasp thy hands!
Now . . . see . . . they are coming. Now . . . they are here!

[*He kneels, as the phantom forms of two* CHILDREN, *bare-footed and clad only in their nightgowns, ascend from below and advance painfully towards him. Between them they carry a two-handled pitcher*]

FIRST CHILD [*faintly*]. Father!
HEINRICH. My child!
FIRST CHILD. Our mother sends thee greeting.
HEINRICH. Thanks, thanks, my dear, dear lad! All's well with her?
FIRST CHILD [*slowly and sadly*]. All's very well! . . .

[*The first faint tones of the sunken bell are heard from the depths*]

HEINRICH. What have you brought with you?
SECOND CHILD. A pitcher.
HEINRICH. Is 't for me?
SECOND CHILD. Yes, father dear.
HEINRICH. What is there in the pitcher, my dear boy?
SECOND CHILD. 'Tis something salt! . . .
FIRST CHILD. . . . And bitter!
SECOND CHILD. Mother's tears!
HEINRICH. Merciful God!
RAUTENDELEIN. What art thou staring at?
HEINRICH. At them . . . all them . . .
RAUTENDELEIN. At whom?
HEINRICH. Hast thou not eyes? At them!

[*To the* CHILDREN]

Where is your mother? Speak, oh, speak!
FIRST CHILD. Our mother?
HEINRICH. Yes! Where is she!
SECOND CHILD. With . . . the . . . lilies . . .
The water-lilies . . .

[*The bell tolls loudly*]

HEINRICH. Ah! The bell!
RAUTENDELEIN. What bell?
HEINRICH. The old, old, buried bell! . . . It rings! It tolls!
Who dealt this blow at me? . . . I will not listen!
Help! Help me! . . . Help! . . .
RAUTENDELEIN. Come to your senses, Heinrich!
HEINRICH. It tolls! . . . God help me! . . . Who has dealt this blow?
Hark, how it peals! Hark, how the buried tones
Swell louder, louder, till they sound as thunder,
Flooding the world! . . .

[*Turning to* RAUTENDELEIN]

I hate thee! I abhor thee!
Back! Lest I strike thee! Hence! Thou witch! Thou trull!
Accursèd spirit! Curst be thou and I!
Curst be my work! . . . And all! . . .
Here! Here am I! . . .
I come! . . . I come! . . . Now may God pity me! . . .

[*He makes an effort, rises, stumbles, rises again, and tears himself away*]

[*The* CHILDREN *have vanished*]

RAUTENDELEIN. Stay! Heinrich! Stay! . . . Woe's me! Lost! . . . Lost for aye!

ACT V

The fir-clad glade seen in Act One.
TIME: *Between midnight and dawn.*
DISCOVERED: *Three* ELVES, *resting near the well.*

FIRST ELF. The flame glows bright!
SECOND ELF. The wind of sacrifice —
The red, red wind — blows in the vale!
THIRD ELF. And lo,
The dark smoke from the pine-clad peak streams down
Into the gulf!
FIRST ELF. And, in the gulf, white clouds
Lie thickly gathered! From the misty sea
The wond'ring herds lift up their drowsy heads,
Lowing, impatient, for their sheltered stalls!
SECOND ELF. A nightingale within the beechwood sang:
It sang and sobbed into the waning night —
Till, all a-quiver with responsive woe,
I sank upon the dewy grass and wept.
THIRD ELF. 'Tis strange! I lay upon a spider's web.
Between the blades of meadow-grass it hung,
All woven out of marvelous purple threads,
And softer than a royal shift it clung.
I lay, and rested, while the glistening dew
Flashed up at me from the green mead below:
And so, my heavy lids did gently droop,
Until at last I slept. When I awoke,
The light had faded in the distant west:
My bed had turned to grey. But, in the east,
Thick clouds went up, and up, that hid the moon,
While all the rocky ridge was covered o'er
With molten metal, glowing in the night.
And, in the bloody glare that downward streamed,
Methought — 'twas strange — the fields did stir with life,
And whisp'rings, sighs, and voices low I heard
That filled the very air with wretchedness.
Ah, it was pitiful! . . . Then, quick, I hailed
A fire-fly, who his soft, green lamp had trimmed.
But on he flew. And so alone I lay,
Trembling with fear, and lost in wonderment.
Till, winged and gleaming as the dragon-fly,
The dearest, loveliest, of all the elves,
Who from afar his coming had proclaimed,
Rustled and fell into my waiting arms.
And, as we prattled in our cosy bed,
Warm tears were mingled with our kisses sweet,
And then he sighed, and sobbed, and pressed me tight,
Mourning for Balder . . . Balder, who was dead!
FIRST ELF [*rising*]. The flame glows bright!
SECOND ELF [*rising*]. 'Tis Balder's funeral pyre!
THIRD ELF [*who meanwhile has moved slowly to the edge of the wood*].
Balder is dead! . . . I'm chill!
[*She vanishes*]
FIRST ELF. A curse doth fall
Upon the land — as Balder's funeral pall!
[*Fog drifts across the glade. When it clears away the* ELVES *have vanished*]

[*Enter* RAUTENDELEIN, *slowly and wearily descending from the hillside. She drags herself towards the well, halting to rest, sitting and rising again with an effort, on her way. When she speaks, her voice is faint and strange*]

RAUTENDELEIN. Whither? . . . Ah, whither? . . . I sat till late,
While the gnomes ran wild in my hall of state.
They brought me a red, red cup to drain —
And I drank it down, in pain.
For the wine I drank was blood!
. . . . . .
And, when I had drained the last red drop,
My heart in my bosom seemed to stop:
For a hand of iron had gripped the strings —
And still with a burning pain it wrings
The heart that I long to cool!
. . . . . .
Then a crown on my wedding-board they laid —
All of rose-red coral and silver made.

As I set it upon my brow I sighed.
Woe's me! Now the Water-man's won his bride!
And I'll cool my burning heart!
. . . . . .
Three apples fell into my lap last night,
Rose-red, and gold, and white —
Wedding-gifts from my water-sprite.
I ate the white apple, and white I grew:
I ate the gold apple, and rich I grew —
And the red one last I ate!
. . . . . .
Pale, white, and rosy-red,
A maiden sat — and she was dead.
Now, Water-man, unbar thy gate —
I bring thee home thy dead, dead mate.
Deep down in the cold, damp darkness, see —
With the silver fishes I come to thee . . .
Ah, my poor, burnt, aching heart!
[*She descends slowly into the well*]

[The Wood-Sprite *enters from the wood, crosses to the well, and calls down*]

The Wood-Sprite. Hey! Holdrio!
Old frog-king! Up with thee!
Hey! Holdrio! Thou web-foot wight bewitched!
Dost thou not hear me, monster? Art asleep?
I say, come up! — and though beside thee lay
Thy fairest water-maid, and plucked thy beard,
I'd still say, leave thy reedy bed and come!
Thou'lt not repent it: for, by cock and pie,
What I've to tell thee is worth many a night
Spent in the arms of thy most lovesick sprite.
The Nickelmann [*from below*]. Brekekekex!
The Wood-Sprite. Up! Leave thy weedy pool!
The Nickelmann [*from below*]. I have no time. Begone, thou chattering fool!
The Wood-Sprite. What? What? Thou toad-i'-the-hole, thou hast no time
To spare from wallowing in thy mud and slime?
I say, I bring thee news. Didst thou not hear?
What I foretold's come true. I played the seer!
He's left her! . . . Now, an thou wilt but be spry,
Thou'lt haply catch thy wondrous butterfly!
A trifle jaded — ay, and something worn:
But, Lord, what care the Nickelmann and Faun?
Rare sport thou'lt find her, comrade, even now —
Ay, more than thou hadst bargained for, I'll vow.
The Nickelmann [*rising from the well and blinking slyly*]. Forsooth! . . . He's tired of her, the minx! And so
Thou'dst have me hang upon her skirts? . . . No, no!
The Wood-Sprite. What? . . . Hast thou wearied of this beauty, too?
Why, then — I would her whereabouts I knew!
The Nickelmann. Go hunt for her!
The Wood-Sprite. I've sought her, like a dog:
Above — below, through mirk, and mist, and fog.
I've climbed where never mountain-goat had been,
And every marmot far and near I've seen.
Each falcon, glede, and finch, and rat, and snake,
I've asked for news. But none could answer make.
Woodmen I passed — around a fire they slept —
From them I stole a brand, and upward crept:
Till, grasping in my hand the burning wood,
At last before the lonely forge I stood.
And now the smoke of sacrifice ascends!
Loud roar the flames — each rafter cracks and bends!
The power the Master boasted once is fled:
For ever and for aye, 'tis past and dead!
The Nickelmann. I know. I know. Thy news is old and stale.
Hast thou disturbed me with this idle tale?
Much more I'd tell thee — ay, who tolled the bell!
And how the clapper swung that rang the knell!

Hadst thou but seen, last night, as I did see,
What ne'er before had been, nor more shall be,
The hand of a dead woman, stark and cold,
Go groping for the bell that tossed and rolled.
And hadst thou heard the bell then make reply,
Peal upon peal send thundering to the sky —
Till, like the lioness that seeks her mate,
It thrilled the Master, even as the Voice of Fate!
I saw the woman — drowned. Her long, brown hair
Floated about her face: 'twas wan with care.
And alway, when her hand the bell had found,
The awful knell did loud, and louder, sound!
I'm old, and used to many a gruesome sight:
Yet horror seized me, and — I took to flight!
Hadst thou but seen, last night, what I have seen,
Thou wouldst not fret about thine elfin quean.
So, let her flit at will, from flower to flower:
I care not, I! Her charm has lost its power.

THE WOOD-SPRITE. 'Ods bodikins! I care, though, for the maid.

So — each to his own taste. I want the jade.
And once I hold her panting in these arms,
'Tis little I shall reck of dead alarms!

THE NICKELMANN. Quorax! Brekekekex! Oho! I see.

So that is still the flea that's biting thee?
Well — kill it, then. Go hunt her till thou'rt spent.
Yet, though a-hunting twice ten years thou went,
Thou shouldst not have her. 'Tis for me she sighs!
She has no liking for thy goaty eyes.
A hen-pecked Water-man, alack, I'm tied
By every whim and humor of my bride.
Now fare thee well. Thou'rt free, to come, or go:
But, as for me — 'tis time I went below!

[*He disappears in the well*]

THE WOOD-SPRITE [*calling down the well*]. So sure as all the stars in heaven do shine —
So sure as these stout shanks and horns are mine —
So sure as fishes swim and birds do fly —
A man-child in thy cradle soon shall lie!
Good-night. Sleep well! And now, be off to bed!
On! On! Through brush and brier!
. . . The flea is dead!

[THE WOOD-SPRITE *skips off*]

[OLD WITTIKIN *issues from the hut and takes down her shutters*]

WITTIKIN. 'Twas time I rose. I sniff the morning air.
A pretty hurly there has been to-night.

[*A cock crows*]

Oho! I thought so. Kikereekikee!
No need to give thyself such pains for me —
Thou noisy rogue — as if we did not know
What's coming, ere such cocks as thou did crow.
Thy hen another golden egg has laid?
And soon the sun shall warm the mirky glade?
Ay. Crow thy loudest, gossip! Sing and sing!
The dawn draws near. So strut thy fill and sing.
Another day's at hand. But — here 'tis dark . . .
Will no mad jack-o'-lantern give me a spark? . . .
I'll need more light to do my work, I wis . . .
And, as I live, my carbuncle I miss.

[*She fumbles in her pocket and produces a carbuncle*]

Ah, here it is.

HEINRICH [*heard without*]. Rautendelein!

WITTIKIN. Ay, call her!
She'll answer thee, I wager, thou poor brawler!

HEINRICH [*without*]. Rautendelein! I come. Dost thou not hear?

WITTIKIN. Thou'lt need to call her louder, man, I fear.

[HEINRICH, *worn and weary, appears on the rocks above the hut. He is pale and in tatters. In his right hand he holds a heavy stone, ready to hurl it back into the depths*]

HEINRICH. Come, if you dare! Be it priest, or be it barber,

Sexton, or schoolmaster — I care not who!
The first who dares another step to take,
Shall fall and headlong plunge into the gulf!
'Twas ye who drove my wife to death, not I!
Vile rabble, witless wretches, beggars, rogues —
Who weeks together mumble idle prayers
For a lost penny! Yet, so base are ye,
That, where ye can, God's everlasting love
Ye cheat of ducats! . . . Liars! Hypocrites!
Like rocks ye are heaped about your nether-land,
Ringing it round, as with a dam of stone,
Lest haply God's own waters, rushing in,
Should flood your arid Hell with Paradise.
When shall the great destroyer wreck your dam?
I am not he . . . Alas! I am not the man!
[*He drops the stone and begins to ascend*]
WITTIKIN. That way is barred. So halt! And climb no more.
HEINRICH. Woman, what burns up yonder?
WITTIKIN. Nay, I know not.
Some man there was, I've heard, who built a thing,
Half church, half royal castle. Now — he's gone!
And since he's left it, up it goes in flame.
[HEINRICH *makes a feeble effort to press upward*]
Did I not tell thee, man, the road was barred?
He who would pass that way had need o' wings.
And thy wings have been broken.
HEINRICH. Ah, broken or no,.
I tell thee, woman, I must reach the peak!
What flames up yonder is my work — all mine!
Dost understand me? . . . I am he who built it.
And all I was, and all I grew to be,
Was spent on it . . . I can . . . I can . . . no more!
[*Pause*]
WITTIKIN. Halt here a while.
The roads are still pitch-dark.
There is a bench. Sit down and rest.
HEINRICH. I? . . . Rest? . . .
Though thou shouldst bid me sleep on silk and down,
That heap of ruins still would draw me on.
The kiss my mother — long she's joined the dust —
Did press years since upon my fevered brow,
Would bring no blessing to me now, no peace:
'Twould sting me like a wasp.
WITTIKIN. Ay, so it would!
Wait here a bit, man. I will bring thee wine.
I've still a sup or two.
HEINRICH. I must not wait.
Water! I thirst! I thirst!
WITTIKIN. Go, draw, and drink!
[HEINRICH *moves to the well, draws, sits on the edge of the well, and drinks. A faint, sweet voice is heard from below, singing mournfully*]
THE VOICE [*from below*]. Heinrich, my sweetheart, I loved thee true.
Now thou art come to my well to woo.
Wilt thou not go?
Love is all woe —
Adieu! Adieu!
HEINRICH. Woman, what voice was that? Speak — answer me!
What called and sang to me in such sad tones?
It murmured, "Heinrich!" . . . from the depths it came . . .
And then it softly sighed, "Adieu! Adieu!"
Who art thou, woman? And what place is this?
Am I awaking from some dream? . . . These rocks,
Thy hut, thyself, I seem to know ye all!
Yet all are strange. Can that which me befell
Have no more substance than a peal that sounds,
And, having sounded, dies away in silence?
Woman, who art thou?
WITTIKIN. I? . . . And who art thou?
HEINRICH. Dost ask me that? . . . Yes! Who am I? God wot!
How often have I prayed to Heaven to tell me! . . .
Who am I, God! . . . But Heaven itself is mute.
Yet this I do know: whatsoe'er I be,
Hero or weakling, demi-god or beast —

I am the outcast child of the bright Sun —
That longs for home: all helpless now, and maimed,
A bundle of sorrow, weeping for the Light
That stretches out its radiant arms in vain,
And yearns for me! . . . What dost thou there?

WITTIKIN. Thou'lt learn that soon enough.

HEINRICH [*rising*]. Nay, I'll begone!
Now, with thy bloody lamplight, show me a way
Will lead me onward, upward, to the heights!
Once I am there, where erst I Master stood,
Lonely I'll live — thenceforth a hermit be —
Who neither rules, nor serves.

WITTIKIN. I doubt it much!
What thou would'st seek up yonder is not that.

HEINRICH. How canst thou know?

WITTIKIN. We know what we do know.
They'd almost run thee down, my friend! . . . Ay, ay!
When life shines bright, like wolves ye men do act,
Rend it and torture it. But, when death comes,
No bolder are ye than a flock of sheep,
That trembles at the wolf. Ay, ay, 'tis true!
The herds that lead ye are but sorry carles
Who with the hounds do hunt and loudly yelp:
They do not set their hounds to hunt the wolf:
Nay, nay: their sheep they drive into its jaws! . . .
Thou'rt not much better than the other herds.
Thy bright life thou hast torn and spurned away.
And when death fronted thee, thou wast not bold.

HEINRICH. Ah, woman, list! . . .
I know not how it came
That I did spurn and kill my clear, bright life:
And, being a Master, did my task forsake,
Like a mere 'prentice, quaking at the sound
Of my own handiwork, the bell which I
Had blessed with speech. And yet 'tis true! Its voice
Rang out so loud from its great iron throat,
Waking the echoes of the topmost peaks,
That, as the threatening peal did rise and swell,
It shook my soul! . . . Yet I was still the Master!
Ere it had shattered me who moulded it,
With this same hand, that gave it form and life,
I should have crushed and ground it into atoms.

WITTIKIN. What's past, is past: what's done, is done, for aye.
Thou'lt never win up to thy heights, I trow.
This much I'll grant: thou wast a sturdy shoot,
And mighty — yet too weak. Though thou wast called,
Thou'st not been chosen! . . . Come. Sit down beside me.

HEINRICH. Woman! Farewell!

WITTIKIN. Come here, and sit thee down.
Strong — yet not strong enow!
Who lives, shall life pursue. But be thou sure,
Up yonder thou shalt find it nevermore.

HEINRICH. Then let me perish here, where now I stand!

WITTIKIN. Ay, so thou shalt. He who has flown so high,
Into the very Light, as thou hast flown,
Must perish, if he once fall back to Earth!

HEINRICH. I know it. I have reached my journey's end.
So be it.

WITTIKIN. Yes! Thou hast reached the end!

HEINRICH. Then tell me —
Thou who dost seem to me so strangely wise —
Am I to die and never more set eyes
On what, with bleeding feet, I still must seek?
Thou dost not answer me? . . . Must I go hence —
Leave my deep night, and pass to deepest darkness —
Missing the afterglow of that lost light?
Shall I not see her once . . . ?

WITTIKIN. Whom wouldst thou see?

HEINRICH. I would see her. Whom else? . . . Dost not know that?

WITTIKIN. Thou hast one wish! . . . It is thy last! . . . So — wish.

HEINRICH [*quickly*]. I have wished!

WITTIKIN. Then thou shalt see her once again.

HEINRICH [*rising and ecstatically*]. Ah, mother! . . . Why I name thee thus, I know not . . .
Art thou so mighty? . . . Canst thou do so much? . . .
Once I was ready for the end, as now:
Half hoping, as each feeble breath I drew,
That it might be the last. But then she came —
And healing, like the breeze in early Spring,
Rushed through my sickly frame: and I grew well . . .
All of a sudden, now I feel so light,
That I could soar up to the heights again!

WITTIKIN. Too late!

[HEINRICH *recoils in terror*]

Thy heavy burdens weigh thee down:
Thy dead ones are too mighty for thee. See!
I place three goblets on the table. So.
The first I fill with white wine. In the next,
Red wine I pour: the last I fill with yellow.
Now, shouldst thou drain the first, thy vanished power
Shall be restored to thee. Shouldst drink the second,
Once more thou shalt behold the spirit bright
Whom thou hast lost. But an thou dost drink both,
Thou must drain down the last.

[*She turns to enter the hut. On the threshold she halts and utters the next words with solemn emphasis*]

I say thou must!

[*She goes into the hut*]

[HEINRICH *has listened to the preceding speech like a man dazed. As* OLD WITTIKIN *leaves him, he rouses himself and sinks on a bench*]

HEINRICH. Too late! . . . She said, "Too late!" . . . Now all is done!
O heart, that knowest all, as ne'er before:
Why dost thou question? . . . Messenger of Fate!
Thy fiat, as the axe, doth sharply fall,
Cutting the strand of life! . . . It is the end!
What's left is respite! . . . But I'll profit by 't.
Chill blows the wind from the abyss. The day
That yonder gleam so faintly doth forerun,
Piercing the sullen clouds with pale white shafts,
I shall not see. So many days I have lived:
Yet this one day I shall not live to see!

[*He raises the first goblet*]

Come then, thou goblet, ere the horror come!
A dark drop glistens at the bottom. One!
A last one . . . Why, thou crone, hadst thou no more?
So be it! [*He drinks*] And now to thee, thou second cup!

[*He raises the second goblet*]

It was for thee that I did drain the first.
And, wert thou missing, thou delicious draught,
Whose fragrance tempts to madness, the carouse
Whereunto God has bid us in this world
Were all too poor, meseems — unworthy quite,
Of thee, who dost the festal board so honor.
Now I do thank thee — thus!

[*He drinks*]

The drink is good.

[*A murmur as of æolian harps floats on the air while he drinks*]

[RAUTENDELEIN *rises slowly from the well. She looks weary and sad. She sits on the edge of the well, combing her long flowing locks. Moonlight.* RAUTENDELEIN *is pale. She sings into vacancy. Her voice is faint*]

RAUTENDELEIN. All, all alone, in the pale moon-shine,
I comb my golden hair,
Fair, fairest Rautendelein!
The mists are rising, the birds take flight,
The fires burn low in the weary night . . .

THE NICKELMANN [*from below*]. Rautendelein!

RAUTENDELEIN. I'm coming!

THE NICKELMANN [*from below*]. Come at once!

RAUTENDELEIN. Woe, woe, is me!
So tight I am clad,
A maid o' the well, bewitched and so sad!

THE NICKELMANN [*from below*]. Rautendelein!
RAUTENDELEIN. I'm coming!
THE NICKELMANN [*from below*]. Come thou now!
RAUTENDELEIN. I comb my hair in the moonlight clear,
And think of the sweetheart who loved me dear.
The blue-bells all are ringing.
Ring they of joy? Ring they of pain?
Blessing and bane —
Answers the song they are singing!
Now down I go, to my weedy well —
No more I may wait:
I must join my mate —
Farewell! Farewell!
[*She prepares to descend*]
Who calls so softly?
HEINRICH. I.
RAUTENDELEIN. Who'rt thou?
HEINRICH. Why — I.
Do but come nearer — ah, why wouldst thou fly?
RAUTENDELEIN. I dare not come! . . . I know thee not. Away!
For him who speaks to me, I am doomed to slay.
HEINRICH. Why torture me? Come. Lay thy hand in mine,
And thou shalt know me.
RAUTENDELEIN. I have never known thee.
HEINRICH. Thou know'st me not?
RAUTENDELEIN. No!
HEINRICH. Thou hast never seen me?
RAUTENDELEIN. I cannot tell.
HEINRICH. Then may God cast me off!
I never kissed thee till thy lips complained?
RAUTENDELEIN. Never.
HEINRICH. Thou'st never pressed thy lips to mine?
THE NICKELMANN [*from below*]. Rautendelein!
RAUTENDELEIN. I'm coming!
THE NICKELMANN. Come. I wait.
HEINRICH. Who called to thee?
RAUTENDELEIN. The Water-man — my mate!
HEINRICH. Thou seest my agony — the pain and strife
That rend my soul, and eat away my life!
Ah, torture me no longer. Set me free!
RAUTENDELEIN. Then, as thou wilt. But how?
HEINRICH. Come close to me!
RAUTENDELEIN. I cannot come.
HEINRICH. Thou canst not?
RAUTENDELEIN. No. I am bound.
HEINRICH. By what?
RAUTENDELEIN [*retreating*]. I must begone to join the round,
A merry dance — and though my foot be sore,
Soon, as I dancing go, it burns no more.
Farewell! Farewell!
HEINRICH. Where art thou? Stay, ah stay!
RAUTENDELEIN [*disappearing behind the well*]. Lost, lost, for ever!
HEINRICH. The goblet — quick, I say!
There . . . there . . . the goblet! . . . Magda? Thou? . . . So pale! . . .
Give me the cup. Who brings it, I will hail
My truest friend.
RAUTENDELEIN [*re-appearing*]. I bring it.
HEINRICH. Be thou blessed.
RAUTENDELEIN. Yes. I will do it. Leave the dead to rest!
[*She gives* HEINRICH *the goblet*]
HEINRICH. I feel thee near me, thou dear heart of mine!
RAUTENDELEIN [*retreating*]. Farewell! Farewell! I never can be thine!
Once I was thy true love — in May, in May —
Now all is past, for aye! . . .
HEINRICH. For aye!
RAUTENDELEIN. For aye!
Who sang thee soft to sleep with lullabies?
Who woke thee with enchanting melodies?
HEINRICH. Who, who — but thou?
RAUTENDELEIN. Who am I?
HEINRICH. Rautendelein!
RAUTENDELEIN. Who poured herself into thy veins, as wine?
Whom didst thou drive into the well to pine?
HEINRICH. Thee, surely thee!
RAUTENDELEIN. Who am I?
HEINRICH. Rautendelein!
RAUTENDELEIN. Farewell! Farewell! [*He drinks*]
HEINRICH. Nay: lead me gently down.
Now comes the night — the night that all would flee.
[RAUTENDELEIN *hastens to him, and clasps him about the knees*]
RAUTENDELEIN [*exultingly*]. The Sun is coming!
HEINRICH. The Sun!

RAUTENDELEIN [*half sobbing, half rejoicing*]. Ah, Heinrich!

HEINRICH. Thanks!

RAUTENDELEIN [*embracing* HEINRICH, *she presses her lips to his, and then gently lays him down as he dies*]. Heinrich!

HEINRICH [*ecstatically*]. I hear them!
'Tis the Sun-bells' song!
The Sun . . . the Sun . . . draws near!
. . . The Night is . . . long!
[*Dawn breaks. He dies*]

THE END

THE SEA-GULL

(*1896*)

By Anton Tchekhoff

TCHEKHOFF AND "THE SEA-GULL"

The life of Tchekhoff, with its multifarious duties as a doctor, its instinctive reactions to people and events and conditions, its mental vitality and physical struggle against the insidious disease of the lungs which quickly developed into tuberculosis, is much like the phantasmagoria of his plays. For the tragedy of his existence is continually buried beneath the moral bravery of his service and the refreshing humor of his insight; and the tragedy which ended with his death, at a comparatively early age, cannot be viewed without the comedy which makes his stories such vivid sketches of Russian conditions, and his plays — other than the one-act travesties like "The Wedding" — so gay and colorful and national and reflective of middle-class ways and manners; so curiously full of realistic detail which cannot be overlooked, and which, when properly blended, turns realism into a quality as spiritual as though realism were something other than it is explained to be.

In such a volume as this, Gorky's "The Lower Depths" should have a place. I passed it by, first, because the text is included in the second series of Dickinson's "Chief Contemporary Dramatists", and it is not my desire to duplicate — unless necessary — work already done by others. But principally I turned to Tchekhoff, for without him, there would be no opportunity for me to consider, even casually, the real Moscow Art Theatre — with the symbol of the Sea-Gull on its curtain — whose very heart and soul he was. The peculiar handling of detail by Tchekhoff called forth the method of Stanislavsky as a producer. Critics very rightly suggest that the baffling newness of Tchekhoff's dramaturgy necessitated a new method of interpretation. And, after one has seen the Moscow Art Theatre company presenting "The Cherry Orchard" and "The Three Sisters", one realizes the triumph of Tchekhoff, of Stanislavsky, and of Realism, which has been receiving such continued blows from the camp of the enemy championing Expressionism.

Fundamentally I do not believe Tchekhoff was a dramatist. When he exclaimed in one of his letters (October 21, 1895), "I swear fearfully at the conventions of the stage", he was expressing his true reactions as an artist, and, at a later date, December 3, 1898, he further attested, "I feel cold about my plays as a rule; I gave up the theatre long ago, and feel no desire now to write for the stage." Again he exclaims, "The Novel is a lawful wife, but the Stage is a noisy, flashy and insolent mistress." This is his testimony.

It was the Moscow Art Theatre that kept him at his post. They discovered his secret of approach, his use of minute detail. It was for them that he wrote "The Cherry Orchard" and "The Three Sisters", full of small pieces of humanity that, by a twist of the artist's hand, like kaleidoscopic glass, fall into spiritual design. The actors of the theatre, when they were rehearsing "The Sea-Gull", after its failure at St. Petersburg, were baffled by what they thought, at first, was irrelevance. "Tchekhoff's plays demand a peculiar treatment on the stage," writes Maurice

Baring in his "The Puppet-Show of Memory", "to make their subtle points tell, and cross the footlights. In them the clash of events is subservient to the human figure; and the human figure itself to the atmosphere in which it is plunged." So far, so good. But I am sure Mr. Baring does not sense the whole value when he says in an essay on Tchekhoff's plays, "Life as a whole never presents itself to us as a definite mathematical problem which needs immediate solution, but rather it is composed of a thousand nothings which together make something vitally important. Tchekhoff has understood this, and given us glimpses of these nothings, and made whole plays out of these nothings."

Shallow indeed would Realism be if this were wholly the process; there is something deeper in the content, otherwise the Russian players could never have succeeded in vitalizing Tchekhoff as they did. George Calderon, who translated the present version of "The Sea-Gull", is near the truth in what he says about that quality of Realism which distinguishes it, as an art process, from the photographic. He asserts rightly that "every artist goes to real life for his matter, and from its chaos brings us an idea." Then he adds:

"The specific difference of the realist is that, having extracted his idea, instead of further distilling the extract (as the Classicist does) or disguising it with mysterious essences (as the Romantic does), he endeavors to restore to it the flavor of reality. He endeavors to manifest the very texture and illusion of Life itself. Having unravelled a thread, he shows it us with a new artful tangle of his own, cheating us by its resemblance to the tangle of the skein from which he drew it."

Tchekhoff was not a prolific playwright: five long dramas and a sheaf of inconsequent sketches. "The Sea-Gull", produced in 1896, at the Alexandrýnsky Theatre, under State endowment at St. Petersburg, was a total failure. Tchekhoff's letters are full of it:

November 21, 1895. Melihovo. "Well, I have finished with the play. I began it *forte* and ended it *pianissimo* — contrary to all the rules of dramatic art. It has turned into a novel. I am rather dissatisfied than satisfied with it, and reading over my new-born play, I am more convinced than ever that I am not a dramatist."

Tchekhoff attributed a large part of the flat reception accorded his play to the unsatisfactory preparation at the theatre. He writes, November, 1896:

"At the first performance I did not see all, but what I did see was dingy, grey, dismal and wooden. I did not distribute the parts and was not given new scenery. There were only two rehearsals, the actors did not know their parts — and the result was a general panic and utter depression; even Madame Kommissarzhevsky's acting was not up to much, though, at one of the rehearsals, she acted marvellously, so that people sitting in the stalls wept with bowed heads."

All this naturally had a depressing effect on Tchekhoff, and he withdrew himself to the country. But the next year Constantin Stanislavsky took "The Sea-Gull" and brought it to success at the Art Theatre in Moscow — a fortunate thing at the moment, for it revived the dramatist's spirit, which was overshadowed by the doctors' definite diagnosis of his illness as tuberculosis. From now on his manner of living was changed, and, in the brief seven years of life left him, he wrote his plays, married the chief actress of Stanislavsky's company — Olga L. Knipper, gave up his much loved medical practise, which in so many vital instances he had put at the service of the Russian peasantry and middle-class.

There is no more stimulating volume than the "Letters of Anton Chekhov to

his Family and Friends." The correspondence shows, as Edward Garnett has said in a review, that "measured by the standards of Christian morality, Tchekhoff was wholly a saint" — generous, of heroic proportions, liberal in politics, fearless, and ready at all times for self-sacrifice. Nothing was too much for him to do to meet Russian condition and try and improve it — whether the taking of a census or the fighting of cholera. He was always ready for social reform; he was as eager to study the peoples of Sahalin — a convict settlement where he put himself to discomfort of body and agony of soul — as was Synge to study the people of the Aran Islands, once his enthusiasm was fired by friends in Paris.

In a letter to G. I. Rossolimo, dated Yalta, October 11, 1899, after telling of the bare facts of his life — born, January 17, 1860, at Taganrog; entered the Moscow University in the Faculty of Medicine, 1879; took the Pushkin prize in 1888; and prepared, in 1890, a study of the penal colony of Sahalin — Tchekhoff adds this significant paragraph:

"I have no doubt that the study of medicine has had an important influence on my literary work; it has considerably enlarged the sphere of my observation, has enriched me with knowledge the true value of which for me as a writer can only be understood by one who is himself a doctor. It has also had a guiding influence, and it is probably due to my close association with medicine that I have succeeded in avoiding many mistakes."

This scientific observation of his made Tchekhoff peculiarly fitted to judge the tendencies of modern life with broad comprehension; and when we add to this the humanistic note which one detects in his stories and letters, we get from him the value of his work in Russian literature. Garnett notes his psychology, his tenderness, his gay sense of humor, his sensitiveness; and claims for Tchekhoff a candor of soul typically Russian in its cultural source.

His letters reveal the man — they are full of small points of observation, comments redolent of Russian condition, always somehow coupled with the broader sympathy which takes him out of locality into world importance. There is a note of sincerity and loyalty and honest frankness in these letters which gives them a rare quality. He himself says, "I can only write from reminiscences, and I have never written directly from Nature. I have let my memory sift the subject, so that only what is important or typical is left in it as in a filter." So much for color. The letters are at every point the man — his external interests, his internal responses — and from them could be culled his entire method as a workman. Even as in a few words he tells vividly a short story, so his letters contain materials for fiction, just as do his note-books. He is indeed a wise man, a good critic, a warm friend, a loyal relative. He is on the side of far horizons in literature — in terse manner he exclaims, "A moralist, an artist ought to pass by everything that has only a temporary value." His greatest worry through life was that he was forced to work for money, oftentimes to the detriment of his soul's joy.

Reading his plays, which reflect so much of his own personal philosophy; his note-books, which show how prone his mind was to sketch as he went; his stories, which in themselves are such graphic note-books of "reminiscence", I cull this which is his Credo, put in negative form:

"I am not a liberal, not a conservative, not a believer in progress, not a monk, not an indifferentist. I should like to be a free artist and nothing more. . . . I hate lying and violence in all their forms, and am equally repelled by the secretaries of consistories. . . . Pharisaism, stupidity and despotism reign not in merchants'

houses and prisons alone. I see them in science, in literature, in the younger generation. . . . That is why I have no preference either for gendarmes, or for butchers, or for scientists, or for writers, or for the younger generation. I regard trade-marks and labels as a superstition. My holy of holies is the human body, health, intelligence, talent, inspiration, love, and the most absolute freedom — freedom from violence and lying, whatever forms they may take. This is the program I would follow if I were a great artist."

I suppose Tchekhoff's later letters to Olga Knipper will contain much data on "The Cherry Orchard" and "The Three Sisters", — the latter written at Yalta in the summer of 1900; the former in the summer of 1903. The preparations for "The Cherry Orchard" proved to be the dramatist's last work; he was already showing serious signs of the rapid inroads of his disease, and the doctors hesitated long before consenting to his returning for rehearsals to Moscow, to a climate unsuited to him. The opening night was a gala celebration — all in honor of the playwright who, sensing how near the end he was, faced with fortitude the struggle which daily became more painful and exacting. "The Cherry Orchard" was produced January 17, 1904. Tchekhoff died July 2nd of the same year.

THE SEA-GULL

(*1896*)

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By ANTON TCHEKHOFF

TRANSLATION AND NOTES BY
GEORGE CALDERON

CHARACTERS

Played at the Glasgow Repertory Theatre in November, 1909.

MADAME ARCÁDINA, *an actress*	*Miss Mary Jerrold*
CONSTANTINE TRÉPLEF, *her son*	*Mr. Milton Rosmer*
SÓRIN, *her brother*	*Mr. Laurence Hanray*
NINA, *daughter of a rich landowner*	*Miss Irene Clarke*
SHAMRÁYEF, *retired lieutenant, Manager of Sorin's estate*	*Mr. Hubert Harben*
PAULINE, *his wife*	*Miss Marie Hudspeth*
MASHA, *their daughter*	*Miss Lola Duncan*
TRIGÓRIN, *a writer*	*Mr. Campbell Gullan*
DORN, *a doctor*	*Mr. M. R. Morand*
MEDVÉDENKO, *a schoolmaster*	*Mr. Percival Clark*
YÁKOF	*Mr. Griffiths*
COOK	*Mr. George Wyley*
HOUSEMAID	*Miss Eva Chaplin*

THE ACTION[1] TAKES PLACE ON SORIN'S ESTATE.

TWO YEARS ELAPSE BETWEEN ACTS III. AND IV.[2]

Reprinted from "Two Plays by Tchekhof" by permission of the publisher, Mr. Mitchell Kennerley, New York.

[1] Or "inaction," as Count de Vogüé prefers to call it.

[2] Accents in the character names, as shown above, are omitted in the play, except in instances where the character name becomes an inherent part of the dialogue. — Editor.

THE SEA-GULL

ACT I

In the park of SORIN'S *estate. A broad avenue runs away from the spectators into the depths of the park towards a lake; the avenue is blocked by a rough stage knocked together for amateur theatricals, concealing the lake. Bushes to right and left. A table and chairs.*

The sun has just set. On the stage, behind the curtain, which is down, are YAKOF *and other workmen; coughing and hammering.*

[*Enter* MASHA *and* MEDVEDENKO, *returning from a walk*]

MEDVEDENKO. Why do you always wear black?

MASHA. I'm in mourning for my life. I am unhappy.

MEDVEDENKO. Why? [*Reflectively*] I don't understand. . . . You're healthy, and though your father is not rich he is quite well off. My life is far heavier to bear than yours. I'm paid only forty-eight shillings a month, minus a deduction for the pension fund; but for all that I don't wear mourning. [*They sit*]

MASHA. It isn't a question of money. Even a pauper may be happy.

MEDVEDENKO. In theory, yes; but in point of practice, there's me and my mother, two sisters and my brother, and my salary's only forty-eight shillings a month. One must eat and drink, eh? One must have tea and sugar; one must have tobacco. There's no getting round that.

MASHA [*looking round at the stage*]. The play begins very soon.

MEDVEDENKO. Yes. Nina Zarétchnaya is to act, and the play is by Constantine Tréplef. They are in love with each other and to-day their spirits will unite in the effort to produce a common artistic image. But my spirit and yours have no common points of contact. I love you; I cannot sit at home for longing for you; every day I come four miles on foot and four miles back again and meet only with a *non possumus*[1] on your part. Naturally. I have no means; we're a big family. Why should anyone want to marry a man who cannot even feed himself?

MASHA. Fiddlesticks. [*Taking snuff*] I am touched by your affection, but I cannot return it; that's all. [*Offering him the snuff-box*] Help yourself.

MEDVEDENKO. Not for me. [*A pause*].

MASHA. It's very close; we shall probably have a storm to-night. You are always either philosophising or talking about money. You think there is no greater misfortune than poverty; but I think it is a thousand times easier to wear rags and beg for bread than . . . However, you wouldn't understand.

[*Enter* SORIN *and* TREPLEF, *right*]

SORIN [*leaning on a stick*]. My dear boy, I never *do* feel at home in the country. And naturally, I'm too old to get used to it now. I went to bed at ten last night and woke this morning at nine, feeling as if my brain were sticking to my skull from too much sleep and all the rest of it. [*Laughing*] After dinner I fell asleep again without intending it, and now I'm all to pieces, still suffering from nightmare, confound it all. . . .

TREPLEF. Yes, you ought to live in

[1] *Non possumus.* The village pedant emerges. In the Russian, Medvédenko says "*indifferentism*" instead of "*ravnodúshie*," indifference. The words are so much alike in English that a literal rendering would spoil the point.

town. [*Seeing* MASHA *and* MEDVEDENKO] Hullo! You'll be called when the play begins; but you mustn't sit here now. I must ask you to go away, please.

SORIN [*to* MASHA]. Márya Ilyínitcha, would you kindly ask your father to have that dog unchained, to keep it from howling? My sister had another sleepless night.

MASHA. You must speak to my father yourself. I'm not going to. So please don't ask me. [*To* MEDVEDENKO] Come on.

MEDVEDENKO [*to* TREPLEF]. Let us know before the play begins, then.

[*Exeunt* MEDVEDENKO *and* MASHA]

SORIN. That means that the dog will howl all night again. There you are! I've never had my own way in the country. In the old days, whenever I took a month's holiday and came here to recoup and all the rest of it, I was always worried so with every sort of nonsense, that before the first day was out I was wishing myself back again. [*Laughing*] I always enjoyed the going away most. . . . And now I've retired, I've nowhere to go to, confound it all. Whether one likes it or not one's got to lump it. . . .

YAKOF [*from the stage, to* TREPLEF]. We're going to have a bathe, Constantine Gavrílitch.

TREPLEF. All right. But you must be back at your places in ten minutes. [*Looking at his watch*] It begins very soon.

YAKOF. Very good, sir. [*Exit*]

TREPLEF [*glancing at the stage*]. What do you think of that for a theatre? Curtain, first wing, second wing, and then empty space. No scenery. You look straight on to the lake and the horizon. The curtain goes up at exactly half-past eight, when the moon rises.

SORIN. Magnificent!

TREPLEF. If Nina is late, of course the whole effect will be spoilt. It's time she arrived. Her father and stepmother are always watching her, and it's as hard for her to escape from the house as it is for a prisoner to escape from jail. [*Puts his uncle's tie straight*] Your hair and beard are all rumpled. You ought to have them cut, don't you think?

SORIN [*smoothing out his beard*]. It's the tragedy of my life. Even when I was young I always looked as if I had taken to drink and all the rest of it. Women never loved me. [*Sitting*] Why is your mother in such low spirits?

TREPLEF. Oh, she's bored. [*Sitting by him*] She's jealous. She's already hostile to me and to the whole performance, because it's Nina Zarétchnaya acting and not she. She hates my play, even before she's seen it.

SORIN [*laughing*]. Well I never! Well I never!

TREPLEF. She is vexed at the idea of Nina Zarétchnaya and not herself having a success even in this poor little theatre. [*Looking at his watch*] She is a psychological curiosity, is my mother. A clever and gifted woman, who can cry over a novel, will reel you off all Nekrásof's poems[1] by heart, and is the perfection of a sick nurse; but venture to praise Eleonora Duse before her! Oho! ho! You must praise nobody but her, write about her, shout about her, and go into ecstasies over her wonderful performance in *La Dame aux Camélias*, or *The Fumes of Life*,[2] but as she cannot have these intoxicating pleasures down here in the country, she's bored and gets spiteful; we are her enemies, she thinks; it's all our fault. Then, she's superstitious, is afraid of the number thirteen, or three candles on a table.[3] She's a miser, too. She has seven thousand pounds in the bank at Odessa; I know it for certain. But ask her to lend you anything and she'll cry.

SORIN. You have got it into your head that she doesn't like your play, and you are nervous and all the rest of it. Set your mind at rest, your mother worships you.

TREPLEF [*pulling the petals from a flower*]. She loves me, she loves me not, she loves me, she loves me not, she loves me, she loves me not. [*Laughs*] You

[1] *Nekrásof's poems.* This shows her tender heart. Nekrásof is one of the *apôtres de la pitié sociale.*

[2] *Fumes of Life.* A play by B. Markévitch, produced under the title *Ólga Rántseva* at the Alexandrýnsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, in 1888. Madame Arcádina evidently starred the provinces in the principal rôles of the famous Sávina. We may imagine her also as Mazda and the Second Mrs. Tanqueray. Sávina, by the by, played Arcádina in *The Sea-Gull;* Arcádina would have insisted on playing Nina.

[3] *Three candles on a table.* A presage of death; for in Russia three candles are put by a dead body, two at the head and one at the feet. The same superstition holds in Ireland.

see, my mother doesn't love me. Why should she? She wants to live, to love, to wear pretty frocks; and I, I am twenty-five years old, and a perpetual reminder that she is no longer young. When I'm not there, she is only thirty-two; when I am, she's forty-three, and she hates me for that. She also knows that I don't believe in the stage. She loves the stage; she thinks that she is advancing the cause of humanity and her sacred art; but I regard the stage of to-day as mere routine and prejudice. When the curtain goes up and the gifted beings, the high priests of the sacred art, appear by electric light, in a room with three sides to it, representing how people eat, drink, love, walk and wear their jackets; when they strive to squeeze out a moral from the flat, vulgar pictures and the flat, vulgar phrases, a little tiny moral, easy to comprehend and handy for home consumption, when in a thousand variations they offer me always the same thing over and over and over again — then I take to my heels and run, as Maupassant ran from the Eiffel Tower, which crushed his brain by its overwhelming vulgarity.

SORIN. We can't get along without the stage.

TREPLEF. We must have new formulæ. That's what we want. And if there *are* none, then it's better to have nothing at all. [*Looks at his watch*] I love my mother, I love her dearly; but it's a tomfool life that she leads with this novelist always at her elbow, and her name for ever in the papers — it disgusts me! Sometimes it is just the egotism of the ordinary man that speaks in me; I am sorry that I have a famous actress for my mother, and I feel that if she had been an ordinary woman I should have been happier. Uncle Peter, what position could be more hopeless and absurd than mine was at home with her? Her drawing-room filled with nothing but celebrities, actors and writers, and among them all the only nobody, myself, tolerated only because I was her son. Who am I? What am I? Sent down from the University without a degree through circumstances for which the editor cannot hold himself responsible, as they say; with no talents, without a farthing, and according to my passport a Kief artisan; for my father was officially reckoned a Kief artisan, although he was a famous actor. So that when these actors and writers in her drawing-room graciously bestowed their attention on me, it seemed to me that they were merely taking the measure of my insignificance; I guessed their thoughts and felt the humiliation.

SORIN. What sort of man is this novelist, by the by? I can't make him out. He never talks.

TREPLEF. Intelligent, simple, inclined to melancholy. Quite a good chap. Famous already before he's forty, and sated with everything. . . . As for his writings . . . what shall I say? Charming, talented . . . but . . . you wouldn't want to read Trigórin after Tolstoy or Zola.

SORIN. I love literary people, my boy. There was a time when I passionately desired two things; I wanted to be married, and I wanted to be a literary man, but neither of them came my way. Ah! how pleasant to be even an unknown writer, confound it all.

TREPLEF [*listening*]. I hear someone coming. [*Embracing* SORIN] I cannot live without her. . . . Even the sound of her footsteps is charming. . . . I am insanely happy.

[*Enter* NINA. TREPLEF *goes quickly to meet her*]

TREPLEF. My lovely one, my dream . . .

NINA [*agitated*]. I'm not late . . . I'm sure I'm not late . . .

TREPLEF [*kissing her hands*]. No, no, no. . . .

NINA. I've been so anxious all day; I was so frightened. I was afraid father would not let me come. . . . But at last he's gone out, just now, with my stepmother. There's a red glow in the sky, the moon is beginning to rise, and I whipped up the horses as fast as I could. [*Laughing*] But I am happy now. [*Squeezing* SORIN'S *hand heartily*]

SORIN [*laughing*]. You've been crying, I can see. . . . Hey, hey! You naughty girl!

NINA. It's quite true. You see how out of breath I am. I've got to go in half-an-hour; we must hurry. I must, I must; don't detain me for heaven's sake. Father doesn't know I'm here.

TREPLEF. It's quite true, it's time to begin. I must go and call the others.

SORIN. I'll go, I'll go, confound it all. I won't be a minute. [*Goes right,*

singing] "To France were returning two Grenadiers!" [*Looks round*] I remember I started singing like that one day, and an Assistant Procureur[1] who was standing by said: "Your Excellency, you have a very strong voice." Then he pondered, and added: "Strong, but ugly!"

[*Exit, laughing*]

NINA. My father and his wife won't let me come here. They say that you are all Bohemians. . . . They are afraid of my becoming an actress. But I am drawn towards the lake like a sea-gull. My heart is full of you. [*Looks round*]

TREPLEF. We are alone.

NINA. Isn't there someone over there?

TREPLEF. No, there's no one. [*Kissing her*]

NINA. What sort of tree is that?

TREPLEF. It's an elm.

NINA. Why is it so dark?

TREPLEF. It's evening already; everything looks darker. Don't go away early, I entreat you.

NINA. I must.

TREPLEF. Shall I drive over to-night, Nina? I will stand all night in the garden and look up at your window.

NINA. You mustn't. The watchman will see you. Trésor is not used to you yet; he'll bark.

TREPLEF. I love you.

NINA. 'Sh!

TREPLEF [*hearing footsteps*]. Who's there? Is that you, Yákof?

YAKOF [*on the stage*]. Yes, sir.

TREPLEF. Get to your places. It's time to begin. Is the moon up?

YAKOF. Yes, sir.

TREPLEF. Have you the methylated spirits? And the sulphur? [*To* NINA] When the red eyes appear, there has to be a smell of sulphur. You'd better go, you'll find everything there. Are you nervous?

NINA. Yes, very. I don't mind your mother; I'm not afraid of her! but Trigórin will be here. I am frightened at acting before him. Such a famous writer! Is he young?

TREPLEF. Yes.

NINA. What wonderful stories he writes!

TREPLEF [*coldly*]. Does he? I don't read them.

NINA. Your play is very hard to act. There are no live people in it.

TREPLEF. Live people! why should there be? A writer's business is not to represent life as it is; nor as he thinks it ought to be, but as it appears in reveries.

NINA. There's very little action in your piece; it is all lines.[2] And I think a play ought always to have a love interest in it. . . .

[*Exeunt behind the stage*]
[*Enter* PAULINE *and* DORN]

PAULINE. It is getting damp. Go back and put on your goloshes.

DORN. I'm too hot.

PAULINE. You take no care of yourself. It's all obstinacy. You're a doctor, and you know perfectly well that the damp air is bad for you; but you like to give me pain; you sat on the veranda the whole of yesterday evening on purpose.

DORN [*singing*]. "Say not that I have spoilt thy youth."

PAULINE. You were so taken up talking to Madame Arcádina, you did not notice the cold. Confess, that you admire her.

DORN. I am fifty-five.

PAULINE. Nonsense, that's not old for a man. You are well preserved and women still admire you.

DORN. Then what do you want of me?

PAULINE. You men are always ready to fall down and grovel before an actress. Always!

DORN [*singing*]. "Once more, once more before thee, love." If society is fond of actors and actresses and treats them differently, for instance, from shopkeepers, that is very natural. That is idealism.

PAULINE. Women have always fallen in love with you, and thrown themselves at your head. Is that idealism too?

DORN [*shrugs his shoulders*]. Why, there has always been something charming in the relation of women to me. What they principally liked in me was the skilful doctor. Ten or fifteen years ago, you remember, I was the only

[1] *Assistant Procureur.* Some cheeky junior of forty. Sórin's career has been passed among Procureurs and Assistant Procureurs, a special breed of prosecuting counsel attached to the Ministry of Justice. He has worked his way up to the dignity of Over-Procureur, with the title of Actual State Councillor, on a level with Major-Generals and Rear-Admirals according to Peter the Great's Table of Comparative Precedence.

[2] *Lines.* Russian, *czitka*, a piece of theatrical slang that Nina is no doubt pleased at knowing.

decent *accoucheur* in the whole province. Besides, I was always an honest man.

PAULINE [*taking his hand*]. My beloved!

DORN. Hush! There's somebody coming.

[*Enter* ARCADINA, *arm-in-arm with* SORIN, TRIGORIN, SHAMRAYEF, MEDVEDENKO, MASHA]

SHAMRAYEF. In 1873 at the Fair at Poltava she acted superbly! A wonderful piece of acting! Do you happen to know too what's become of Chadin, Paul Chadin, the comedian? As Raspluyef he was simply A1; better than Sadovsky,[1] I assure you. What's become of *him?*

ARCADINA. You are always wanting to know about somebody before the flood. How should I know? [*Sits*]

SHAMRAYEF [*sighing*]. Good old Paul Chadin! We have no one like that now. The stage has gone to the dogs, Irina Nikolayevna. There were mighty oaks in the old days, but now we see nothing but stumps.

DORN. There are not many really brilliant people on the stage now, that is true; but the average actor is far better.

SHAMRAYEF. I can't agree with you. However, it's a matter of taste. *De gustibus aut bene, aut nihil.*

[TREPLEF *comes out from behind the stage*]

ARCADINA. My dear child, when does the thing begin?

TREPLEF. In a minute. Please be patient.

ARCADINA. "My son,
Thou turnst mine eyes into my very soul,
And there I see such blank and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct."

TREPLEF. "Leave wringing of your hands. Peace, sit you down,
And let me wring your heart." [2]

[*A horn is blown from the stage*] Now then, the play begins. Attention, please! [*A pause*] I speak first. [*He thumps with a stick; raising his voice*] Hearken, ye venerable ancient shades, that hover in the night-time over this lake; send sleep upon us and let us dream of what will be in 200,000 years.

SORIN. In 200,000 years there will be nothing at all.

TREPLEF. Then let them represent that nothing to us.

ARCADINA. Come on! We sleep.

[*The curtain rises; the view opens on the lake; the moon is above the horizon, reflected in the water;* NINA *discovered sitting on a rock, dressed in white*]

NINA. Men and lions, eagles and partridges, antlered deer, geese, spiders, the silent fishes dwelling in the water, star-fish and tiny creatures invisible to the eye — these and every form of life, ay, every form of life, have ended their melancholy round and become extinct. . . . Thousands of centuries have passed since this earth bore any living being on its bosom. All in vain does yon pale moon light her lamp. No longer do the cranes wake and cry in the meadows; the hum of the cockchafers is silent in the linden groves. All is cold, cold, cold. Empty, empty, empty. Terrible, terrible, terrible. [*A pause*] The bodies of living beings have vanished into dust; the Eternal Matter has converted them into stones, into water, into clouds; and all their spirits are merged in one. I am that spirit, the universal spirit of the world. In me is the spirit of Alexander the Great, of Cæsar, of Shakespeare, of Napoleon, and of the meanest of leeches. In me the consciousness of men is merged with the instinct of animals; I remember everything, everything, everything, and in myself relive each individual life.[3]

[*Marsh fires appear*]

ARCADINA [*in a low voice*]. This is going to be something decadent.

TREPLEF [*with reproachful entreaty*]. Mother!

[1] *Better than Sadovsky.* This is like saying: He was simply splendid in *Ici on parle français;* much funnier than Toole, I can assure you. Sadovsky was a Moscow star who died in 1872; Raspluyef is a low-comedy character in Sukhovo-Kobylin's play, *Kretchinsky's Wedding.*

[2] In the Russian Tréplef answers with a garbled version of Shakespeare's "nasty sty" lines. If we quoted them, we should have to be inconveniently exact. For this excellent substitute the translator is indebted to the ingenuity of Mr. Hanray, who played Sorin in Glasgow.

[3] The play attributed to Constantine is of course a kindly skit on the Decadents. But the philosophy at the bottom of it is a distorted image of the Pantheistic creed which Tchekhoff really held. According to Merezhkovsky (p. 54) Deism (and this includes Christianity) is extinct among thinking Russians; they are all Pantheists (not Atheists, as Mr. Maurice Baring tendentiously alleges); God for them is neither more nor less than the sum total of all mundane spirits. For Tchekhoff, even to pick flowers was a kind of sacrilege ("Na Pamyat," p. 12).

NINA. I am alone. Once in a hundred years I open my lips to speak, and my voice echoes sadly in this emptiness and no one hears. . . . You too, pale fires, you hear me not. . . . The corruption of the marsh engenders you towards morning, and you wander till the dawn, but without thought, without will, without throb of life. Fearing lest life should arise in you, the father of Eternal Matter, the Devil, effects in you, as in stones and water, a perpetual mutation of atoms; you change unceasingly. In all the universe spirit alone remains constant and unchanging. [*A pause*] Like a captive flung into a deep empty well, I know not where I am nor what awaits me. One thing only is revealed to me, that in the cruel and stubborn struggle with the Devil, the principle of material forces, it is fated that I shall be victorious; and thereafter, spirit and matter are to merge together in exquisite harmony and the reign of Universal Will is to begin. But that cannot be till, little by little, after a long, long series of centuries, the moon, the shining dog-star and the earth are turned to dust. . . . Till then there shall be horror and desolation. . . . [*A pause; against the background of the lake appear two red spots*] Behold, my mighty antagonist, the Devil, approaches. I see his awful, blood-red eyes . . .

ARCADINA. There's a smell of sulphur. Is that part of it?

TREPLEF. Yes.

ARCADINA [*laughing*]. I see, a scenic effect.

TREPLEF. Mother!

NINA. He is lonely without man.

PAULINE [*to* DORN]. Why, you've taken your hat off. Put it on again, or you'll catch cold.

ARCADINA. The doctor's taking off his hat to the Devil, the father of Eternal Matter.

TREPLEF [*angry, in a loud voice*]. The play is over! That's enough! Curtain!

ARCADINA. What are you angry about?

TREPLEF. That's enough. Curtain! Lower the curtain! [*Stamping*] Curtain! [*The curtain is lowered*] I must apologise. I ought to have remembered that only a few chosen spirits can write plays or act them. I have been infringing the monopoly. You . . . I . . . [*Is about to add something, but makes a gesture of renouncing the idea, and exit, left*]

ARCADINA. What's the matter with him?

SORIN. Irene, my dear, you oughtn't to treat a young man's *amour propre* like that.

ARCADINA. Why, what have I said?

SORIN. You have hurt his feelings.

ARCADINA. He warned us beforehand that it was all a joke; I've only taken him at his word and treated it as a joke.

SORIN. But still . . .

ARCADINA. And now it appears that he has written a masterpiece. Mercy on us! So he has got up this performance and stifled us with brimstone not as a joke, but as a demonstration. . . . He wanted to teach us how to write and what we ought to act. Really, this sort of thing gets tedious! These perpetual digs and pinpricks would wear out the patience of a saint. He's a peevish, conceited boy.

SORIN. He only wanted to give you pleasure.

ARCADINA. Did he? Then why couldn't he choose some ordinary sort of play, instead of making us listen to this decadent nonsense? I don't mind listening to nonsense now and again for fun; but this pretends to show us new forms, a new era in art. I see no new forms in it; I see nothing but an evil disposition.

TRIGORIN. Everyone writes as he wants to, and as he can.

ARCADINA. Let him write as he wants and can, and welcome; only let him leave me in peace.

DORN [*singing*]. "Great Jove, art angry yet" . . .

ARCADINA. I'm not Jove, I'm a woman. [*Lighting a cigarette*] Besides, I'm not angry; I only think it's a pity that a young man should spend his time so tediously. I had no intention of hurting his feelings.

MEDVEDENKO. No one has any grounds for differentiating spirit and matter; spirit itself is very likely a collection of material atoms. [*Eagerly to* TRIGORIN] Ah, if only someone would write a play and put it on the stage, showing the life we schoolmasters lead! It's a hard, hard life![1]

[1] If Tchekhoff makes Medvédenko a little ridiculous, he is sorry for him too. He was always concerned about the miserable conditions in which village schoolmasters worked. "Good teachers," he said

ARCADINA. Quite true; but don't let us talk about plays or atoms. What a glorious evening! Do you hear? The peasants are singing. [*Listening*] How beautiful!

PAULINE. That's on the farther shore. [*A pause*]

ARCADINA [*to* TRIGORIN]. Sit by me here. Ten or fifteen years ago there was music and singing to be heard here by the lake almost every evening. There were six big country houses round the shore. It was all laughter, and noise, and the firing of guns . . . and love-making, love-making without end. The *Jeune Premier*, the idol of all six houses, was our friend here. [*Nodding at* DORN] You haven't met? Dr. Dorn, Eugene Sergéitch. He is still charming, but in those days he was irresistible. But my conscience is beginning to prick me. Why did I hurt my poor boy's feelings? I feel uneasy. [*Calling*] Constantine! Dear boy! Constantine!

MASHA. I'll go and look for him.

ARCADINA. Do, there's a dear.

MASHA [*going left*]. A-oo! Constantine Gavrilovitch! A-oo!

[*Exit*]

NINA [*coming from behind the stage*]. Evidently we're not to go on. I can come out. How do you do? [*Kisses* ARCADINA *and* PAULINE]

SORIN. Bravo, bravo.

ARCADINA. Bravo, bravo. We were all enchanted. With such a face and figure, with such a lovely voice, it is wicked to stay hidden in the country. I am sure that you have talent. Mark my words! You must go on the stage.

NINA. Oh, it is the dream of my life! [*Sighing*] But it can never be realised.

ARCADINA. Who knows? Let me introduce you; Trigórin, Boris Alexéyevitch.

NINA. Oh, I'm so glad. [*Shyly*] I read all you write. . . .

ARCADINA [*making* NINA *sit by her*]. Don't be shy, my dear. He has a simple soul, although he's a celebrity. You see, he's just as shy himself.

DORN. I suppose we can have the curtain up again now? It feels rather uncanny like this.

SHAMRAYEF [*loud*]. Yákof, pull the curtain up, my lad, will you?

[*Curtain is raised*]

NINA [*to* TRIGORIN]. It's a strange play, isn't it?

TRIGORIN. I didn't understand a word. However, I enjoyed looking on. You acted with such sincerity. And the scenery was lovely. [*A pause*] No doubt there are a great many fish in this lake?

NINA. Yes.

TRIGORIN. I love fishing. I know no greater pleasure than to sit towards evening by the water and watch a float.

NINA. Surely, for one who has tasted the pleasure of creation, all other pleasures cease to exist.

ARCADINA [*laughing*]. You mustn't talk to him like that. If people make him pretty speeches he runs away.

SHAMRAYEF. I remember one day in the opera-house at Moscow, the famous Silva took the low C. As luck would have it, there was one of our Synod choirmen[1] sitting in the gallery; imagine our astonishment when all of a sudden we heard a voice from the gallery, "Bravo, Silva," a whole octave lower. Like this. [*In a deep bass voice:*] "Bravo, Silva." The audience was dumfounded. [*A pause*]

DORN. There's an angel flying over the park.

NINA. I must be off. Good-bye.

ARCADINA. Where are you going? Why so early? We won't let you go.

NINA. Papa's expecting me.

ARCADINA. It's too bad of him. [*They kiss*] Well, we can't help it. It's very, very sad to part with you.

NINA. If only you knew how unwilling I am to go.

to Gorky, "are the first necessity for village life. Without a general education of the people the Empire will fall to pieces like a house built of badly baked bricks. The schoolmaster ought to be an artist in love with his work, instead of which he is a laborer who goes to it as he would go to exile in Siberia. Hungry, oppressed and terrified, he ought to be the first man in the village." He dreamt, vaguely, of building a sanatorium for sick ushers at Kutchuk-Koi in the Crimea: "a big bright building, with big windows and high ceilings; a library; various musical instruments; a bee walk, an orchard, a kitchen garden; with lectures on agriculture, meteorology, et cetera" ("Pamyati", 83, 84). Fortunately this dreadful place was never built; but the schoolmasters of the Empire are so grateful for his representation of them in his plays and stories that they are establishing a Teachers' Club in his honor, in connection with their Friendly Society in Moscow ("Jubilee Sbornik," 6).

[1] *Synod choirman.* A member of the choir founded in 1892 under the direction of the Holy Synod to serve two of the principal churches in the Kremlin, to sing in religious street processions in Moscow, etc.

ARCADINA. Somebody must see you home, darling.

NINA [*alarmed*]. Oh no, no!

SORIN [*imploringly*]. Don't go!

NINA. I must, Peter Nikolayevitch.

SORIN. Stay just for an hour, confound it all. It's too bad.

NINA [*hesitating; then crying*]. I can't. [*Shakes hands and exit quickly*]

ARCADINA. There's a really unfortunate girl! They say that her mother left her husband all her huge fortune when she died, down to the last farthing, and now this child is left with nothing, for he's made a will bequeathing it all to his second wife. It's monstrous.

DORN. Yes, her papa's a pretty mean sort of a sneak, to do him justice.

SORIN [*rubbing his hands to warm them*]. We'd better be going too; it's getting damp. My legs are beginning to ache.

ARCADINA. They're like bits of wood, you can hardly walk on them. Come along, ill-fated patriarch! [*Takes his arm*]

SHAMRAYEF [*offering his arm to his wife*]. Madame?

SORIN. There's that dog howling again. [*To* SHAMRAYEF]. Please tell them to unchain that dog, Ilyá Afanásyevitch.

SHAMRAYEF. Can't be done, Peter Nikolayevitch; I'm afraid of thieves breaking into the barn. I've got the millet there. [*To* MEDVEDENKO, *who walks beside him*] Yes, a whole octave lower: "Bravo, Silva!" And not a concert singer, mind you, but an ordinary Synod choirman.

MEDVEDENKO. And what salary does a Synod choirman get?

[*Exeunt omnes, except* DORN]

DORN [*alone*]. I don't know. Perhaps I don't understand anything, or I'm going off my head, but the fact is I liked the play. There was something in it. When the girl spoke of her solitude, and then afterwards when the Devil's red eyes appeared, my hands trembled with excitement. It was fresh and naïf. There he comes apparently. I want to say all the nice things I can to him.

[*Enter* TREPLEF]

TREPLEF. They've all gone.

DORN. I'm here.

TREPLEF. Masha's looking for me all over the park. Repulsive female!

DORN. Constantine Gavrilovitch, I liked your play extremely. It was a curious kind of thing and I didn't hear the end, but all the same it made a deep impression on me. You are a man of talent, and you must go on.

[TREPLEF *squeezes his hand and embraces him eagerly*]

DORN. What a nervous creature you are! Tears in his eyes! What did I want to say? You have chosen a subject in the realm of abstract ideas. You were quite right; every artistic production ought to express a great thought. Nothing is beautiful unless it is serious. How pale you are!

TREPLEF. So you think that I ought to go on?[1]

DORN. Yes. But represent only what is important and eternal. You know that I have lived my life with variety and discrimination; I'm quite contented; but if ever I felt the elevation of spirit which comes to artists in the moment of creation, I am sure that I should despise my material envelope and all that belongs to it and be carried away from the earth aloft into the heights.

TREPLEF. Excuse me, where is Nina Zarétchnaya?

DORN. And then there's another thing. In every production there must be a clear and well-defined idea. You must know what your object is in writing; otherwise, if you travel this picturesque path without a well-defined aim, you will go astray and your talent will be your ruin.

TREPLEF [*impatiently*]. Where is Nina Zarétchnaya?

DORN. She's gone home.

TREPLEF [*in despair*]. What am I to do? I want to see her. I *must* see her. I shall drive after her.

[*Enter* MASHA]

DORN [*to* TREPLEF]. Calm yourself, my friend.

TREPLEF. All the same I shall go after her. I must go after her.

MASHA. Please go up to the house, Constantine Gavrilovitch. Your mother's waiting for you. She's anxious about you.

TREPLEF. Tell her I've gone out.

[1] Tchekhoff, in writing these lines, cannot but have recalled his own feelings of gratitude when, still an unknown young writer, he received a letter of encouragement from the great Grigorovitch. His letter in answer is the most engagingly warm-hearted thing imaginable ("Letters," 32).

And please, all of you, leave me in peace! Leave me alone! Don't follow me about!

DORN. Come, come, my dear boy. You mustn't talk like that. . . . It isn't right.

TREPLEF [*with tears in his eyes*]. Good-bye, doctor. Thank you.

[*Exit*]

DORN [*sighing*]. Ah, youth! youth!

MASHA. When there is nothing else left to say, people say: "Ah, youth! youth!" [*Takes snuff*]

DORN [*taking* MASHA'S *snuff-box and throwing it into the bushes*]. A filthy habit! [*Pause*] They seem to be having music up at the house. We must go in.

MASHA. Stop a moment.

DORN. Eh?

MASHA. I want to say something to you again. I want to talk. [*Agitated*] I don't care for my father, but my heart goes out to you. I somehow feel, with all my soul, that you are near to me. . . . Come, help me. Help me, or I shall commit some folly, I shall make havoc of my life. . . . I can't hold out any longer.

DORN. What is it? How am I to help you?

MASHA. I am in pain. No one knows my sufferings. [*Laying her head on his breast, softly*] I am in love with Constantine.

DORN. What bundles of nerves they all are! And what a lot of love. . . . Oh, magic lake! Oh, magic lake! [*Tenderly*] What can I do, my child? What can I do?

ACT II

The croquet lawn. Far up at the back, on the right, the house with big veranda. On the left the lake is visible, with the reflection of the sun twinkling in the waters. Flower-beds. Midday; hot. At the side of the croquet lawn, in the shade of an old lime-tree, sit ARCADINA, DORN *and* MASHA *on a bench.* DORN *has a book open on his knees.*

ARCADINA [*to* MASHA]. Come, get up. [*They get up*] Let us stand side by side. You are twenty-two and I am nearly twice as much. Eugene Sergéitch, which of us looks the youngest?

DORN. You do of course.

ARCADINA. There! And why? Because I work, because I feel, because I am always on the move. While you remain sitting in one place; you don't live. And I make it a rule, never to look forward into the future. I never think about old age or death. What will be will be.

MASHA. And I, I have a feeling as if I had been born ages and ages ago. I drag my life, a dead weight, after me, like the train of an endless dress. Often I have no desire to live. [*Sits*] Of course, this is all rubbish. One must shake oneself and throw it all off.

DORN [*singing softly*]. "Tell her, tell her, pretty flowers."

ARCADINA. Then again, I am always "correct," like an Englishman. I keep myself up to the mark, as they say, and am always dressed, and have my hair done *comme il faut*. I should never dream of leaving the house, even to come into the garden like this, in a *négligé*, or with my hair undone. Never. The reason I am so well preserved is that I have never been a dowdy, never let myself go as some do. . . . [*Walks up and down the croquet lawn with arms akimbo*] There! you see? as light as a bird; ready to act the part of a girl of fifteen any day.

DORN. Well, I'm going on anyway. [*Taking up his book*] We'd got as far as the cornchandler and the rats.

ARCADINA. And the rats. Go on. [*Sits*] No, give it to me. I'll read. It's my turn. [*Taking the book and looking for the place*] And the rats. Here we are. [*Reading*] "Truly, it is just as dangerous for people of fashion to beguile novelists to their houses as it would be for a cornchandler to rear rats in his granary. And yet they are much sought after. When a woman has chosen the writer that she wishes to take captive, she lays siege to him by means of flattery and delicate attentions. . . ." That may be true in France, but we have nothing of the sort in Russia; we have no programme. As a rule, before a Russian woman takes her writer captive, she's head over ears in love with him. No need to look far afield; take me and Trigórin, for instance.

[*Enter* SORIN, *leaning on a stick;* NINA *beside him.* MEDVEDENKO *wheels a chair behind them*]

SORIN [*as if talking to a child*]. Eh? so we're having a treat? We're happy

for once, confound it all! [*To* ARCADINA] Such fun! Papa and stepmamma have gone to Tver, and we're free for three whole days.

NINA [*sitting by* ARCADINA *and embracing her*]. I am so happy! Now I belong to you.

SORIN [*sitting in his chair*]. She's in looks to-day.

ARCADINA. Well dressed and interesting. That's a good girl! [*Kisses her*] We mustn't praise you too much for fear of bewitching you.[1] Where is Trigórin?

NINA. Down at the bathing-place, fishing.

ARCADINA. I wonder he doesn't get sick of it! [*Prepares to go on reading*]

NINA. What is the book?

ARCADINA. Maupassant's "On the Water," my dear. [*Reads a few lines to herself*] The rest's dull and quite untrue. [*Shutting the book*] I am feeling anxious and perturbed. Tell me, what is the matter with my son? Why is he so gloomy and morose? He passes whole days together on the lake and I hardly ever see him.

MASHA. He is troubled at heart. [*To Nina; timidly*] I wish you would recite something from his play.

NINA [*shrugging her shoulders*]. Really? It's so dull.

MASHA [*with restrained enthusiasm*]. When *he* reads anything aloud, his eyes glow and his face turns pale. He has a beautiful melancholy voice, and manners like a poet.

[SORIN *snores audibly*]

DORN. Good-night.

ARCADINA. Peter!

SORIN. Eh?

ARCADINA. Are you asleep?

SORIN. Not I. [*A pause*]

ARCADINA. It's so foolish of you not to undergo a treatment, Peter.

SORIN. I should be delighted, but Dorn won't let me.

DORN. A treatment at sixty!

SORIN. Even at sixty one wants to live.

DORN [*testily*]. Eh! Very well then, take Valerian drops.

ARCADINA. I think he ought to go and take the waters somewhere.

DORN. All right. He can go if he likes . . . or he can stop at home if he likes.

ARCADINA. How's one to understand you?

DORN. There's nothing to understand. It's perfectly plain. [*A pause*]

MEDVEDENKO. Peter Nikolayevitch ought to give up smoking.

SORIN. Rubbish!

DORN. No, it's not rubbish. Wine and tobacco rob us of our individuality. After a cigar or a glass of vodka you are no longer Peter Nikolayevitch but Peter Nikolayevitch plus somebody else. Your ego evaporates, and you think of yourself in the third person; not as "me" but as "him."

SORIN [*laughing*]. It's all very well for you to talk. You've lived in your time; but what about me? I have spent twenty-eight years in the law courts, but I haven't begun to live yet, haven't had any experiences, confound it all, and isn't it natural that I long to live at last? You are sated and indifferent and therefore you are disposed to philosophise; but I want to live, and that's why I drink sherry at dinner and smoke cigars and all the rest of it. That's all.

DORN. One ought to be serious about life. But to take medicine at sixty and lament that one did not have fun enough when one was young, that, if you'll excuse me, is frivolous.

MASHA [*rising*]. It must be lunch-time. [*Walking lazily*] My leg's gone to sleep.

[*Exit*]

DORN. She's going to get down a couple of glasses of vodka before lunch.

SORIN. The poor thing gets no enjoyment out of life.

DORN. Rot, your Excellency.

SORIN. You talk like a man who has had his fill.

ARCADINA. Oh dear! oh dear! what can be more tedious than this truly rural country tedium! So hot! so quiet! No one does anything; everyone philosophises.[2] You're pleasant company, my friends, and it's very nice to hear you talk, but . . . Oh, to be sitting in one's hotel, studying one's part, how very much nicer!

[1] *Bewitching you* — *i.e.* exercising the power of the Evil Eye on you, by exciting our own envy.

[2] In a letter of 1889 ("Letters", 138) Tchekhoff speaks of a comedy that he began and put aside. "I wrote two acts and threw it up; it turned out tedious; there is nothing so tedious as a tedious play." The rest of the letter, written in summer, in the depths of the country, where his brother was ill, when "neighbors come, day follows days, conversation follows conversation," recalls this scene enough to suggest that *The Sea-Gull* may have been the tedious comedy in question; either that or *Ivánof*.

NINA [*enthusiastically*]. Oh, indeed! How well I can understand you!

SORIN. Of course it's better in town. Sitting in one's study, all visitors have to send their names up by the footman, a telephone handy . . . cabs in the street and all the rest of it. . . .

DORN [*singing*]. "Tell her, tell her, pretty flowers!"

[*Enter* SHAMRAYEF; *after him* PAULINE]

SHAMRAYEF. There they are. Good day to you. [*Kisses* ARCADINA'S *hand, then* NINA'S] [*To* ARCADINA] Very glad to see you in such good health. My wife tells me you were thinking of driving into town with her to-day. Is that true?

ARCADINA. Yes, we're going into town.

SHAMRAYEF. H'm! That's all very well, but how do you propose to get there, my dear madam? We're carrying the rye to-day, and all the laborers are busy. What horses are you to have, I should like to know?

ARCADINA. What horses? How should I know what horses?

SORIN. There are the carriage horses.

SHAMRAYEF [*excited*]. The carriage horses? And where am I to get collars from? Where am I to get collars? It really is extraordinary! Incomprehensible! My dear madam, you must excuse me. I have the greatest respect for your talents. I am ready to give ten years of my life for you, but horses I cannot let you have.

ARCADINA. But if I have to go into town? This is really too much.

SHAMRAYEF. My dear lady! You do not know what farming means.

ARCADINA [*angry*]. It is the old story again! If that is the case I go back to Moscow to-day. Send to the village to hire horses for me, or I shall go to the station on foot.

SHAMRAYEF [*angry*]. In that case I resign my post! You must look for a new agent!

[*Exit*]

ARCADINA. It is the same thing every summer; every summer I am insulted here. I will never set foot in this place again.

[*Exit left, towards the bathing-place. A minute later she is seen going up to the house.* TRIGORIN *follows her with fishing rods and pail*]

SORIN [*angry*]. This is effrontery! This is beyond all bounds! I'll stand it no more, confound it all! Let *all* the horses be brought here at once!

NINA [*to* PAULINE]. Refuse Madame Arcádina, the famous actress! Is not every lightest wish of hers, or even caprice, of more importance than your farming arrangements? It is absolutely incredible.

PAULINE [*in despair*]. What can I do? Imagine yourself in my position. What can I do?

SORIN [*to* NINA]. Let us follow my sister. We will all entreat her not to go away, eh? [*Looking in the direction where* SHAMRAYEF *went out*] Hateful fellow! Tyrant!

NINA [*preventing him from rising*]. Sit down, sit down. We will wheel you. [*She and* MEDVEDENKO *wheel the chair*] What an awful thing to have happened!

SORIN. Perfectly awful. But he shall not get out of it like that. I shall give him a piece of my mind.

[*Exeunt.* DORN *and* PAULINE *remain*]

DORN. How monotonous people are! Of course the right thing would have been to fire your husband right out and have done with him, but the end of it will be that this old woman, Peter Sorin, and his sister will apologise and ask him to forgive them. You'll see.

PAULINE. He has sent the carriage horses to help carry the rye. These misunderstandings happen day after day. If you knew how agitating it all is for me. I shall be ill; see, I am all trembling. . . . His bad manners are more than I can bear. [*Entreating*] Eugene, my dearest, my darling, let me leave him and come to you. Time is flying over us, we are no longer young; let us have done with concealment and falsehood before our days are ended. [*A pause*]

DORN. I am fifty-five. It is too late to change my way of life.

PAULINE. I know why you refuse. It is because there are other women besides myself who are dear to you. You cannot let them all come to you. I understand. Forgive me; you are tired of me.

[NINA *appears near the house, picking flowers*]

DORN. No, no, I'm not tired of you.

PAULINE. I suffer agonies of jeal-

ousy. Of course you are a doctor; you cannot avoid women. I understand.

DORN [*to* NINA, *who comes down*]. How are they getting on?

NINA. Madame Arcádina is crying and Monsieur Sórin has got asthma.

DORN [*rising*]. I must go and give them both some Valerian drops.

NINA [*giving him her flowers*]. These are for you.

DORN. *Merci bien.* [*Goes towards the house*]

PAULINE [*following him*]. What pretty flowers! [*Near the house, in a low voice*] Give me those flowers! Give me those flowers! [*She tears them up and throws them aside*]

[*Exeunt into the house*]

NINA [*alone*]. How strange to see an eminent actress in tears, and all about such a trifle! And is it not wonderful that a famous writer, the darling of the public, mentioned daily in the papers, with his photograph in the shop windows, his books translated into foreign languages, should spend his whole day fishing and be delighted because he has caught two chub.[1] I imagined that famous people were proud and inaccessible, that they despised the crowd, and by their fame, by the glamor of their names, as it were, revenged themselves on the world for giving birth and riches the first place. But it seems they cry, fish, play cards, laugh and get angry like everyone else. . . .

[*Enter* TREPLEF, *hatless, with a gun and a dead sea-gull*]

TREPLEF [*at the gate*]. Are you alone?

NINA. Yes. [TREPLEF *lays the bird at her feet*] What does that mean?

TREPLEF. I have been brute enough to shoot this sea-gull. I lay it at your feet.

NINA. What is the matter with you? [*She takes up the gull and looks at it*]

TREPLEF [*after a pause*]. I shall soon kill myself in the same way.

NINA. You are not yourself.

TREPLEF. No, not since you ceased to be yourself. You have changed towards me; you look coldly at me; you are not at ease when I am by.

NINA. You have grown nervous and irritable of late; you express yourself incomprehensibly in what seem to be symbols. This sea-gull seems to be another symbol; but, I am afraid I don't understand. [*Laying it on the seat*] I am too simple to understand you.

TREPLEF. It began the night of the idiotic fiasco of my play. Women cannot forgive failure. I have burnt everything, everything to the last scrap. If only you knew how unhappy I am! Your sudden indifference to me is terrible, incredible, as if I woke one morning and behold, this lake had dried up or run away into the earth. You said just now that you are too simple to understand me. Oh, what is there to understand? My play was a failure; you despise my inspiration; you look on me as commonplace and worthless, like hundreds of others. . . . [*Stamping*] How well I can understand it! How well I can understand it! I feel as if there were a nail being driven into my brain. The devil take it. The devil take my vanity too, which sucks out my blood, sucks it out like a snake. [*Seeing* TRIGORIN, *who reads a note-book as he walks*] There goes the man of real talent; he walks like Hamlet; with a book too. [*Mocking*] "Words, words, words!" This sun has not yet risen on you, yet you smile already, your looks are melted in his rays. I will not stand in your way.

[*Exit quickly*]

TRIGORIN [*writing in his book*]. Takes snuff and drinks vodka. . . . Always dressed in black. Schoolmaster in love with her.

NINA. Good-morning, Boris Alexéyevitch.

TRIGORIN. Good-morning.[2] It appears that owing to some unexpected turn of events we are leaving to-day. You and I are hardly likely to meet again. I am sorry. I do not often come across young women, young interesting women; I have already forgotten how one feels at eighteen or nineteen and I cannot imagine it very clearly; so that the young women in my stories and novels are generally untrue to life. How I should like to be in your place, if only for an hour, so as to know what you think and what manner of creature you are altogether.

[1] Fishing with a float and looking for mushrooms were Tchekhoff's own favorite occupations when he was in the country.

[2] The actor who plays Trigórin would do well to imitate Tchekhoff himself as his friends describe him: A sad, thoughtful face, a soft, intimate way of talking, a childlike shyness; shrinking from praise, gentle in all his movements; then, when the moment comes, a sort of exaltation.

NINA. And how I should like to be in your place!

TRIGORIN. Why?

NINA. So as to know how it feels to be a gifted and famous writer. What does fame feel like? What sensation does it produce in you?

TRIGORIN. What sensation? Evidently, none. I never thought about it. [*Reflecting*] One of two things; either you exaggerate my fame, or fame produces no sensation.

NINA. But if you read about yourself in the papers?

TRIGORIN. When they praise me I like it; when they abuse me I feel low-spirited for a day or two.

NINA. What a world to live in! How I envy you, if you but knew it! How different are the lots of different people! Some can hardly drag on their tedious, insignificant existence, they are all alike, all miserable; others, like you for instance — you are one in a million — are blessed with a brilliant, interesting life, all full of meaning. . . . You are happy.

TRIGORIN. Am I? [*Shrugging his shoulders*] H'm! . . . You talk of fame and happiness, of some brilliant, interesting life; but for me all these pretty words, if I may say so, are just like marmalade, which I never eat. You are very young and very kind.

NINA. What a delightful life is yours!

TRIGORIN. What is there so very fine about it? [*Looking at his watch*] I must be off to my writing in a moment. You must excuse me; I can't stop. [*Laughs*] You have trodden on my favorite corn,[1] as they say, and you see, I begin to get excited and angry at once. However, let us talk. We'll talk about my delightful, brilliant life. . . . Come on; where shall we begin? [*Meditating*] You have heard of obsessions, when a man is haunted day and night, say, by the idea of the moon or something? Well, I've got my moon. Day and night I am obsessed by the same persistent thought; I must write, I must write, I must write. . . . No sooner have I finished one story than I am somehow compelled to write another, then a third, after the third a fourth. I write without stopping, except to change horses like a post-chaise. I have no choice. What is there brilliant or delightful in that, I should like to know? It's a dog's life! Here I am talking to you, excited and delighted, yet never for one moment do I forget that there is an unfinished story waiting for me indoors. I see a cloud shaped like a grand piano. I think: I must mention somewhere in a story that a cloud went by, shaped like a grand piano. I smell heliotrope. I say to myself: Sickly smell, mourning shade, must be mentioned in describing a summer evening. I lie in wait for each phrase, for each word that falls from my lips or yours, and hasten to lock all these words and phrases away in my literary storeroom: they may come in handy some day. When I finish a piece of work, I fly to the theatre or go fishing, in the hope of resting, or forgetting myself, but no, a new subject is already turning, like a heavy iron ball, in my brain; some invisible force drags me to my table and I must make haste to write and write. And so on for ever and ever. I have no rest from myself; I feel that I am devouring my own life, that, for the honey which I give to unknown mouths out in the void, I rob my choicest flowers of their pollen, pluck the flowers themselves and trample on their roots. Surely I must be mad? Surely my friends and acquaintances do not treat me as they would treat a sane man? "What are you writing at[2] now? What are we going to have next?" So the same thing goes on over and over again, until I feel as if my friends' interest, their praise and admiration, were all a deception; they are deceiving me as one deceives a sick man, and sometimes I'm afraid that at any moment they may steal on me from behind and seize me and carry me off, like Póprishtchin[3] to a madhouse. In the old days, my young best days, when I was a beginner, my work was a continual torture. An unimportant writer, especially when things are going against him, feels clumsy, awkward and superfluous; his nerves are strained and tormented; he cannot keep from hovering about

[1] *Favorite corn.* A piece of English humor strayed over to Russia, probably in the pages of Jerome K. Jerome, who is much *goûté* over there.

[2] *Writing at: popisyvat* instead of *pisát:* one of their charming compound verbs, half frequentative and half diminutive. It suggests that his writing is a sort of game, something that serves to keep him out of mischief. The critic Mikhailovsky used it, in early days, of Tchekhoff's compositions ("Karpof," 43).

[3] *Póprishtchin.* The hero of Gogol's "Diary of a Madman."

people who have to do with art and literature, unrecognised, unnoticed, afraid to look men frankly in the eye, like a passionate gambler who has no money to play with. The reader that I never saw presented himself to my imagination as something unfriendly and mistrustful. I was afraid of the public; it terrified me; and when each new play of mine was put on, I felt every time that the dark ones in the audience were hostile and the fair ones coldly indifferent. How frightful it was! What agony I went through!

NINA. But surely inspiration and the process of creation give you sublime and happy moments?

TRIGORIN. Yes. It's a pleasant feeling writing; . . . and looking over proofs is pleasant too. But as soon as the thing is published my heart sinks, and I see that it is a failure, a mistake, that I ought not to have written it at all; then I am angry with myself, and feel horrible. . . . [*Laughing*] And the public reads it and says: "How charming! How clever! . . . How charming, but not a patch on Tolstoy!" or "It's a delightful story, but not so good as Turgénef's 'Fathers and Sons,'" And so on, to my dying day, my writings will always be clever and charming, clever and charming, nothing more. And when I die, my friends, passing by my grave, will say: "Here lies Trigórin. He was a charming writer, but not so good as Turgénef!"

NINA. You must excuse me; I *refuse* to understand you. You are simply spoilt by success.

TRIGORIN. By what success? I've never satisfied *myself*. I do not care for myself as a writer. The worst of it is that I live in a kind of bewilderment and often do not understand what I write. I love water like this, trees, sky; I have the feeling for nature; it wakes a passion in me, an irresistible desire to write. But I am something more than a landscape-painter; I am a citizen as well; I love my country, I love the people; I feel that if I am a writer I am bound to speak of the people, of its sufferings, of its future, to speak of science, of the rights of man, et cetera, et cetera; and I speak about it all, volubly, and am attacked angrily in return by everyone; I dart from side to side like a fox run down by the hounds; I see that life and science fly farther and farther ahead of me, and I fall farther and farther behind, like the countryman running after the train[1]; and in the end I feel that the only thing I can write of is the landscape, and in everything else I am untrue to life, false to the very marrow of my bones.

NINA. You work too hard; you have no time or wish to realize your own importance. You may be dissatisfied with yourself, but in the eyes of others you are great and wonderful. If I were a writer like you I would sacrifice my whole life to the million, but I would realize that its only happiness was to raise itself up to me; they should pull my chariot along.

TRIGORIN. Chariot indeed! . . . Am I Agamemnon then, eh? [*They both smile*]

NINA. For such happiness as to be a writer or an actress I would endure the hatred of my nearest and dearest. I would endure poverty and disillusionment. I would lodge in a garret and live on black bread. I would suffer dissatisfaction with myself, the consciousness of my own imperfections, but in return I would demand glory . . . real, ringing glory. [*Covering her face with her hands*] My head swims. Ouf!

ARCADINA [*heard from the house*]. Boris Alexéyevitch!

TRIGORIN. I'm being called. To pack, no doubt. But I don't want to go away. [*Looking at the lake*] Isn't it heavenly? Just look at it!

NINA. You see that house and garden on the farther shore?

TRIGORIN. Yes.

NINA. They used to belong to my mother. I was born there. I have spent the whole of my life by this lake and I know every little island on it.

TRIGORIN. It's perfectly delicious here! [*Seeing the sea-gull*] And what's this?

NINA. A sea-gull. Constantine Gavrilovitch shot it.

TRIGORIN. It's a lovely bird. I don't want to go away at all. Persuade Madame Arcádina to stay. [*Writes in his note-book*]

NINA. What are you writing?

TRIGORIN. I was just making a note.[2] A subject occurred to me.

[1] In some story, one presumes.

[2] Tchekhoff himself had whole pocketbooks full of subjects for stories ("Pamyati," 170); but he discouraged the random use of notes as positively harmful to an imaginative writer. "There is no need

[*Putting note-book away*] A subject for a short story. A girl — like yourself, say — lives from her childhood on the shores of a lake. She loves the lake like a sea-gull, and is happy and free like a sea-gull. But a man comes along by chanee and sees her and ruins her, like this sea-gull, just to amuse himself.

[*A pause.* ARCADINA *appears at a window*]

ARCADINA. Where are you, Boris Alexéyevitch?

TRIGORIN. Coming! [*Looks back at* NINA *as he goes. At the window, to* ARCADINA] What is it?

ARCADINA. We're staying on.

[*Exit* TRIGORIN *into the house*]

NINA [*coming down to the footlights. After a pause and meditation*]. It's like a dream!

ACT III

Dining-room in SORIN'S *house. Doors right and left. Sideboard. Cupboard with medicaments. Table centre. Trunks and bandboxes; preparations for departure.* TRIGORIN *lunching,* MASHA *standing by the table.*

MASHA. I tell you all this because you're a novelist. You can make use of it, if you like. I tell you candidly, if he had wounded himself seriously I should not have consented to live another minute. And yet I'm a brave woman. I've made up my mind; I will tear this love out of my heart, I will tear it out by the roots.

TRIGORIN. How are you going to do that?

MASHA. I am marrying, marrying Medvédenko.

TRIGORIN. The schoolmaster?

MASHA. Yes.

TRIGORIN. I don't see the necessity.

MASHA. What? to love without hope, for years and years to be waiting and waiting. . . . No. Once I am married, there will be no question of love; new cares will drown all traces of the old life. And yet it's a wrench. . . . Shall we have another go?

TRIGORIN. Won't it be rather a lot?

MASHA. Nonsense. [*Pours out a glass of vodka for each*] Don't look at me like that. More women drink than you think. Some drink openly like I do; most of them drink secretly. Yes, it's always vodka or brandy. [*They clink glasses*] Here's luck. You're a simple-minded soul; I am sorry you're going. [*They drink*]

TRIGORIN. I don't want to go myself.

MASHA. Ask her to stop on.

TRIGORIN. No, she won't stop now. Her son has been behaving extremely tactlessly. First he tried to shoot himself, and now I'm told he wants to challenge me to a duel. And why? He sulks and sneers and preaches new forms. . . . Well, there's room for all of us, both new and old; why should we jostle one another?

MASHA. He's jealous too. However, it's no affair of mine. [*A pause.* YAKOF *crosses right to left, with a portmanteau. Enter* NINA, *and stops by the window*] My schoolmaster's not particularly clever, but he's a good fellow, poor devil, and devoted to me. I'm sorry for him. I'm sorry for his old mother too. Well, I wish you the best of everything. Think no evil of us. [*Shakes him warmly by the hand*] Thank you for all your friendliness. Send me your books, and mind and put your autograph in them. Only don't write: "To my friend" So and So "from the author," but just: "To Masha, 22, of no occupation,[1] born into this world for no apparent purpose." Good-bye.

[*Exit*]

NINA [*holding out her clenched hand towards* TRIGORIN]. Odd or even?

TRIGORIN. Even.

NINA [*sighing*]. "No." I have only one pea in my hand. The question was, whether I was to become an actress or not. If only someone would advise me!

TRIGORIN. It's a question one can't advise on. [*A pause*]

NINA. We are parting to-day and very likely we shall never meet again. Please accept this little medallion as a keepsake. I have had your initials engraved on it . . . and on the other side the name of your book, "Days and Nights."

to write down comparisons, neat characterisations, or details of natural scenes: all this must present itself of its own accord, when it is wanted. But a naked fact, a rare name, a technical appellation, should be entered in a book; otherwise it will get scattered and lost." For the rest, he said, "what is important will stick; and the details you can always discover or invent" (*ibid.* 131).

[1] Literally: "To Mary, who does not remember her parentage"; a formula of police protocols.

TRIGORIN. How graceful! [*Kissing the medallion*] What a charming present!

NINA. Think of me sometimes.

TRIGORIN. I will indeed. I will think of you as you were that sunny day, do you remember? a week ago, when you wore a cotton frock[1] . . . and we talked . . . and there was a sea-gull lying on the seat.

NINA [*meditatively*]. A sea-gull, yes. [*A pause*] We can't talk any more; there's somebody coming. . . . Give me two minutes before you go, I entreat you. . . .

[*Exit left. At the same moment enter* ARCADINA, *right*, SORIN *in swallow-tail coat, with the star of an order; then* YAKOF, *busy with luggage*]

ARCADINA [*to* SORIN]. Stay at home, you old man. You oughtn't to go gadding about with your rheumatism. [*To* TRIGORIN] Who was it just went out? Nina?

TRIGORIN. Yes.

ARCADINA. *Pardon!* We interrupted you. [*Sitting*] I think I've packed everything. I'm worn out.

TRIGORIN [*reading the inscription on the medallion*]. "'Days and Nights,' page 121, lines 11 and 12."

YAKOF [*clearing the table*]. Am I to pack the fishing rods too, sir?

TRIGORIN. Yes, I shall want them again. And you can give the books away.

YAKOF. Very good, sir.

TRIGORIN [*to himself*]. "Page 121, lines 11 and 12." What can those lines contain? [*To* ARCADINA] Have you got my books anywhere in the house?

ARCADINA. Yes, in Peter's study; in the corner cupboard.

TRIGORIN. "Page 121."

[*Exit*]

ARCADINA. You'd really better stop at home, Peter.

SORIN. I shall feel dreadfully dull without you when you're gone.

ARCADINA. And will you be any the better for running into town?

SORIN. I don't suppose I shall, but all the same. . . . [*Laughing*] There's the laying the foundation-stone of the new Council-house and all the rest of it. . . . I must shake off this stickle-back life if it's only for an hour or two; I've been lying too long on the shelf like an old cigarette-holder. I've ordered my cart at one; we'll start together.

ARCADINA [*after a pause*]. Well, be happy here; don't be bored; don't catch cold. Keep an eye on my boy. Take care of him. Give him good advice. [*A pause*] I shall go away without having found out why Constantine tried to shoot himself. I expect the chief reason was jealousy; and the sooner I take Trigórin away the better.

SORIN. Well, now, how shall I put it? . . . there were other reasons too. It's very natural; a clever young man, living in the depths of the country, with no money, no position, no future. He has no occupation. He is ashamed and afraid of his indolence. I love him dearly and he is fond of me, but still, confound it all, he feels as if he were in the way here, only a parasite, a hanger-on. It's very natural, a man's vanity . . .

ARCADINA. He's a great trial. [*Meditating*] He might go into a Government office, perhaps. . . .

SORIN [*whistling; then hesitatingly*]. I fancy the best thing would be if you were to . . . if you were to let him have a little money. In the first place he ought to be dressed like a human being and all the rest of it. He's been wearing the same jacket these three years; he hasn't got an overcoat at all. . . . [*Laughing*] Then the lad ought to see life a bit. . . . Go abroad and all that. . . . It don't cost much.

ARCADINA. Still . . . Well, I might manage the clothes, but as for going abroad . . . No, I can't manage the clothes either just at present. [*Resolutely*] I haven't any money. [SORIN *laughs*] I haven't.

SORIN [*whistling*]. Well, well! Don't be angry, my dear. I believe you . . . You're a large-hearted admirable woman.

ARCADINA [*crying*]. I haven't any money.

SORIN. If I had any myself, of course I'd let him have it, but I have nothing, not a penny piece. [*Laughing*] Shamráyef collars all my pension and spends it on the farm, the cattle and the bees, and no one ever sees it again. The bees die, the cows die, I can never have any horses. . . .

ARCADINA. Well, I have got some money; but remember please, I'm an artiste; my wardrobe alone has simply ruined me.

SORIN. You're a dear good thing . . .

[1] Literally: "bright-colored frock."

I respect you . . . I . . . But I'm feeling queer again. [*Staggers*] My head's going round. [*Holding on to the table*] I feel faint and all the rest of it.

ARCADINA [*frightened*]. Peter! [*Trying to support him*] Petrusha, my darling! [*Shouting*] Help! help! [*Enter* TREPLEF, *with bandage on head, and* MEDVEDENKO]. He's fainting!

SORIN. All right, all right! [*Smiles and drinks some water*] It's gone and all the rest of it.

TREPLEF. Don't be afraid, mother, there's no danger. Uncle Peter often gets like that nowadays. [*To* SORIN] You'd better lie down, uncle.

SORIN. Yes, I will for a bit. But I'll go into town all the same. I'll lie down first; of course, of course.

[*Goes right, leaning on stick*]

MEDVEDENKO [*giving him an arm*]. There's a riddle: He walks on four legs in the morning, on two at noon, on three in the evening. . . .

SORIN [*laughing*]. Quite so. And on his back at night. Don't you trouble, I can manage. . . .

MEDVEDENKO. Nonsense! come along!

[*Exeunt* MEDVEDENKO *and* SORIN, *right*]

ARCADINA. He quite frightened me.

TREPLEF. It's bad for his health living in the country. He's miserable. Now if, in a sudden burst of generosity, you could lend him a couple of hundred pounds, he would be able to spend the whole year in town.

ARCADINA. I haven't any money. I'm an actress, not a banker. [*A pause*]

TREPLEF. Please change my bandage, mother. You do it so well.

ARCADINA [*getting iodoform and a drawerful of bandages from the medicine cupboard*]. The doctor's late.

TREPLEF. It's twelve and he promised to be here by ten.

ARCADINA. Sit down. [*Taking off bandage*] You look as if you had a turban on. A man asked the servants yesterday what nationality you were. It's almost healed up. There's hardly anything left there. [*Kissing his head*] You promise not to play at chik-chik again while I'm away?[1]

TREPLEF. I promise, mother. That was in a moment of mad despair when I had lost all self-control. It won't happen again. [*Kissing her hand*] You have the hands of an angel. I remember a long time ago, when you were still on the Imperial stage — I was quite little then — there was a fight in the courtyard of the house we lived in; a washerwoman who lodged there got awfully knocked about. You remember? She was picked up senseless. . . . You were always going in to see her, taking her medicine and bathing her children in the washtub. Don't you remember?

ARCADINA. No. [*Putting on a new bandage*]

TREPLEF. There were two ballet-girls lodging in the same place. . . . They used to come in for coffee. . . .

ARCADINA. I remember that.

TREPLEF. They were very pious. [*A pause*] These last few days I have loved just as tenderly and trustfully as when I was a child. I have nobody left now but you. But why, oh why do you submit to this man's influence?

ARCADINA. You don't understand him, Constantine. He has the noblest nature in the world. . . .

TREPLEF. Yet when he was told that I meant to challenge him to fight, his noble nature did not prevent him from playing the coward. He is going away. It's an ignominious flight!

ARCADINA. What rubbish! It was I who asked him to go.

TREPLEF. The noblest nature in the world! Here are you and I almost quarrelling about him, and where is he? In the garden or the drawing-room laughing at us, improving Nina's mind, and trying to persuade her that he's a genius.

ARCADINA. It seems to give you pleasure to try and hurt my feelings. I respect Trigórin and I must ask you not to abuse him to my face.

TREPLEF. And *I don't* respect him. You want *me* to believe him a genius too; but you must excuse me, I can't tell lies; his writings make me sick.

ARCADINA. This is mere envy. Conceited people with no talent have no resource but to jeer at really talented people. It relieves their feelings, no doubt!

TREPLEF [*ironically*]. Really talented people! [*Angry*] I am more talented than all of you put together if it comes to that! [*Tearing off his bandage*] You apostles of the commonplace have taken the front seats in all the arts for yourselves and call nothing but what

[1] *Chik-chik*: a playful onomatopœia for the click of the pistol trigger.

you do yourselves legitimate and real; you persecute and stifle all the rest. I don't believe in any of you; I don't believe in *you* and I don't believe in *him!*

ARCADINA. Decadent!

TREPLEF. Go back to your beloved theatre and act your pitiful stupid plays!

ARCADINA. I never acted in such plays! Leave me! You cannot even write a miserable vaudeville if you try! Kiev artisan! Parasite!

TREPLEF. Skinflint!

ARCADINA. Tatterdemalion! [TREPLEF *sits down and cries quietly*] You insignificant nobody! [*Walking up and down agitatedly*] Don't cry. Don't cry, I say. [*Crying*] Please don't cry. [*Kissing his forehead, cheeks and head*] My darling child, forgive me. . . . Forgive your wicked mother! Forgive your unhappy mother!

TREPLEF [*embracing her*]. If only you knew! I have lost everything. She doesn't love me and I cannot write any more . . . all my hopes are lost.

ARCADINA. Don't lose heart. It will be all right in the end. He is going away; she will love you again. [*Wiping away his tears*] Stop crying. We are friends once more.

TREPLEF [*kissing her hands*]. Yes, mother.

ARCADINA [*tenderly*]. Be friends with him too. You mustn't have a duel. You won't have one?

TREPLEF. Very well. But you mustn't let me meet him any more, mother. It hurts me; it is too much for me. [*Enter* TRIGORIN] There! I will go away. [*Hastily puts the medicaments away in the cupboard*] The doctor shall bandage me when he comes.

TRIGORIN [*looking for the place in a book*]. Page 121. Lines 11 and 12. Ha! [*Reading*] "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it."

[TREPLEF *picks up his bandage and goes*]

ARCADINA [*looking at the time*]. The horses will soon be round.

TRIGORIN [*to himself*]. "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it."

ARCADINA. You've got your things all packed, I hope?

TRIGORIN [*impatiently*]. Yes, yes. [*Reflectively*] Why do I hear the sound of anguish in this cry of a pure spirit? Why does my heart sink so painfully? "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it." [*To* ARCADINA] Let us stay another day. [*She shakes her head*] Let us stay.

ARCADINA. Dear friend, I know what makes you want to stay. You should have some self-control. You've lost your senses a little; come back to reason.

TRIGORIN. And do you too come back to reason; be thoughtful and considerate, I beseech you; look at all this like a real friend. [*Pressing her hand*] You are capable of a sacrifice. Be kind and set me free!

ARCADINA [*in deep agitation*]. Are you so much in love?

TRIGORIN. Something beckons me towards her. Perhaps this is the very thing that I really need. . . .

ARCADINA. The love of a provincial girl? Oh, how little you know yourself.

TRIGORIN. People sometimes sleep as they walk; and even while I talk to you, it is as if I were asleep and saw her in my dreams. . . . Wonderful sweet visions possess me. . . . Set me free!

ARCADINA [*trembling*]. No, no. I am an ordinary woman; I cannot be talked to so. Don't torment me, Boris. I am frightened.

TRIGORIN. If you will try you can be an extraordinary woman. A sweet poetical young love, wafting me away into the world of reveries, there is nothing on earth can give happiness like that. Such a love I have never yet experienced. As a young man I had no time; I was wearing out editors' thresholds, struggling with poverty[1] . . . and now at last it stands before me beckoning, this love. . . . Should I not be a fool to fly from it?

ARCADINA [*angrily*]. You have gone out of your mind.

TRIGORIN. Who cares?

ARCADINA. You are all banded together to-day to torment me. [*Crying*]

TRIGORIN [*taking his head between his hands*]. She doesn't understand. She refuses to understand.

ARCADINA. Am I so old and ugly already that men can say what they like about other women to me? [*Embracing and kissing him*] Oh, you are mad, mad! My darling, wonderful Boris! Last page of my life! [*Kneeling*] My

[1] So Tchekhoff himself complained that success had come to him too late in life. He had spent his strength to no purpose in the struggle for existence ("Pamyati," 162). He used to support all his family by writing for comic papers when he was still a student at the University.

joy, my pride, my bliss. [*Embracing his knees*] If you desert me even for an hour, I cannot survive it, I shall go out of my mind, my splendid incomparable friend, my king.

TRIGORIN. Someone might come in. [*Helping her to rise*]

ARCADINA. Who cares? I am not ashamed of my love for you. [*Kissing his hands*] You are rash and wild, my treasure; what you want to do is madness; you shall not, I will not let you. [*Laughing*] You are mine! mine! This forehead is mine, these eyes are mine, this lovely silky hair is mine . . . You are all mine! You are so clever, so gifted, the best of all the writers of the day, you are the only hope of Russia. . . . You have such a gift of sincerity, simplicity, freshness and bracing humor. . . . In a single stroke you give the essence of a character or a landscape; your people are all alive. Oh, no one can read you without delight! Do you think this is mere incense and flattery? Come, look me in the eyes, right in the eyes. Do I look like a liar? You see, there is nobody but me who knows your true value; nobody; I am the only person who tells you the truth, my precious darling. . . . You'll come? Say you will. You won't desert me?

TRIGORIN. I have no will of my own. I never had a will of my own. Weak-kneed, flabby and submissive; everything that women hate. Take me, carry me away, but never let me stir an inch from your side.

ARCADINA [*to herself*]. He's mine! [*Carelessly*] Well, stay if you like. I'll go to-day and you follow a week later. After all, why should you hurry!

TRIGORIN. No. We'll go together.

ARCADINA. As you please. We'll go together if you like. [*A pause.* TRIGORIN *writes in his note-book*] What's that?

TRIGORIN. I heard a good expression this morning: the corn was "shuckled" by the wind.[1] It may come in some time. [*Stretching*] So we are off? Railway carriages again, stations, refreshment rooms, mutton chops and conversations. . . .

[*Enter* SHAMRAYEF]

SHAMRAYEF. I have the melancholy honor of announcing that the carriage is round. It's time to start for the station, dear lady; the train comes in at two-five. Now don't forget to inquire, if you'll be so good, Irina Nikolayevna, what has become of Suzdáltsef. Is he alive? Is he well? Many's the drink we had together. He was inimitable in *The Lyons Mail*. He was playing at that time at Elizavétgrad with Izmailov, the tragedian, another remarkable man. . . . No hurry, my dear lady, we've still got another five minutes to spare. They played the conspirators once in a melodrama, and when they were suddenly found out, the line was: "We are caught like rats in a trap"; but Izmailov said, "like trats in a rap" instead! [*Laughing*] "Trats in a rap"!

[*While he is speaking* YAKOF *is busy with the luggage; a housemaid brings* ARCADINA *her hat, mantle, parasol and gloves; everyone helps* ARCADINA *to dress. A man-cook looks in left, and after a little while enters irresolutely. Enter* PAULINE, *then* SORIN *and* MEDVEDENKO.]

PAULINE [*offering a basket*]. Here are some plums for the journey. They're nice and sweet. I thought you might enjoy them.

ARCADINA. How kind of you, Pauline Andréyevna.

PAULINE. Good-bye, my dear. If there was ever anything amiss, forgive it. [*Crying*]

ARCADINA [*embracing her*]. Everything has been perfect, perfect! Only you mustn't cry.

PAULINE. Our sands are running out.

ARCADINA. It can't be helped.

SORIN [*with cape-coat, hat, stick, entering left and crossing room*]. Time to be off, Irene; you mustn't be late, confound it all. I'm going to get in.

MEDVEDENKO. I shall go to the station on foot to see you off. I'll be there in no time.

[*Exit*]

ARCADINA. Good-bye, everyone. If we're alive and well we shall meet again in the summer. [*Housemaid, man-cook and* YAKOF *kiss her hand*] Don't forget me. [*Giving the cook a rouble*] There's a rouble to divide among you.[2]

[1] "*Shuckled.*" The translator has palmed off a handy substitute, instead of rendering Trigórin's own *trouvaille*, which seems to mean "the maids' spinney."

[2] *A rouble:* worth two shillings and a penny. [In paper money about 51 cents.]

COOK. Our humblest thanks, lady. A good journey to you! We are very content with you!

YAKOF. Heaven send you happy times!

SHAMRAYEF. Make us happy with a little letter. [*To* TRIGORIN] Goodbye, Boris Alexéyevitch!

ARCADINA. Where's Constantine? Tell him that I am off. We must say good-bye. [*To* YAKOF] Think no evil of us. I've given the cook a rouble. It's for the three of you.

[*Exeunt all, right. Stage empty. Noise of farewells and departure behind the scene. Housemaid comes back for the basket of plums, and exit with it.*]

TRIGORIN [*coming back*]. I've left my stick behind. I think she's out there on the veranda. [*Goes left and meets* NINA, *entering*] Ah, it's you. We're off.

NINA. I felt that we should meet again. [*Agitatedly*] Boris Alexéyevitch, I have made up my mind beyond recall; the die is cast; I am going on the stage. To-morrow I shall be gone from here; I am leaving my father; I am giving up everything and beginning a new life. I am going where you are going . . . to Moscow. We shall meet there.

TRIGORIN [*looking round*]. Stop at the "Slavyansky Bazaar." Let me know at once. Molchanóvska, Grokhólsky's house . . . I'm in a hurry. . . . [*A pause*]

NINA. One minute more.

TRIGORIN [*murmuring*]. How beautiful you are! . . . What joy to think that we shall meet again so soon. [*She lays her head on his bosom*] I shall see these lovely eyes once more, this inexpressibly tender, charming smile, this sweet face, this expression of angelic purity. . . . My darling! [*A long kiss*]

[*Two years elapse between the third and fourth Acts*]

ACT IV

One of the drawing-rooms in SORIN'S *house, converted by* CONSTANTINE *into a study. Doors right and left. A glass door in the back on to the veranda. Besides usual drawing-room furniture, a writing-table stands up right, a Turkish divan by the door left, bookcase, books on window-sills and chairs. Evening. Twilight. One lamp alight, with shade. The wind howls in the trees and chimneys. Watchman beats a board outside as he passes.*

[*Enter* MEDVEDENKO *and* MASHA]

MASHA [*calling*]. Constantine Gavrilitch! Constantine Gavrilitch! [*Looking about*] There's no one here. The old man keeps asking every minute, "Where's Constantine? Where's Constantine?" He can't live without him.

MEDVEDENKO. He's afraid of solitude. [*Listening*] What a fearful storm! It's been like this for two whole days.

MASHA [*turning up the lamp*]. There are waves on the lake, great big ones.

MEDVEDENKO. How dark it is in the garden! They ought to have that stage in the garden pulled down. It stands all bare and ugly like a skeleton, and the curtain flaps in the wind. As I came by yesterday evening I thought I heard someone crying there.

MASHA. Did you? [*A pause*]

MEDVEDENKO. Let's get home, Masha.

MASHA [*shaking her head*]. I shall stay the night here.

MEDVEDENKO [*imploringly*]. Come home, Masha. Our baby must be starving.

MASHA. Rubbish! Matróna will feed it. [*A pause*]

MEDVEDENKO. Poor little beggar; three nights away from its mother.

MASHA. What a bore you are! In the old days you used at any rate to philosophise; but now it's always baby, baby, home, home. Can't you find anything new to say?

MEDVEDENKO. Let's go, Masha.

MASHA. Go yourself.

MEDVEDENKO. Your father won't let me have a horse.

MASHA. Yes, he will. You ask him, he'll let you have one fast enough.

MEDVEDENKO. Well, I'll try. Then you'll come to-morrow?

MASHA [*taking snuff*]. All right. Can't you leave me alone? [*Enter* TREPLEF, *carrying pillows and blankets, and* PAULINE *with sheets. They put them on the Turkish divan and* TREPLEF *goes and sits at the writing-table*] What's this about, mother?

PAULINE. Monsieur Sórin wants his bed made in Constantine's room.

MASHA. I'll help. [*Spreading sheets*]

PAULINE [*sighing*]. Old folk are just like children. [*Goes to writing-table, leans on her elbow and looks over* CONSTANTINE'S *manuscript. A pause*]

MEDVEDENKO. Well, I'll be off. Good-bye, Masha. [*Kissing his wife's hand*] Good-bye, mother. [*Offering to kiss* PAULINE'S *hand*]

PAULINE [*sourly*]. There, go along, do!

MEDVEDENKO. Good-bye, Constantine Gavrilitch. [CONSTANTINE *shakes hands silently*]

[*Exit* MEDVEDENKO]

PAULINE [*looking at the manuscript*]. Nobody ever imagined that you would become a real writer, Constantine. But now, thank heaven, the magazines send you money for your stories. [*Stroking his hair*] And you've grown so handsome. Dear, good Constantine, try and be kinder to my Masha.

MASHA [*laying the bed*]. Do leave him alone, mother.

PAULINE [*to* CONSTANTINE]. She's such a dear. [*A pause*] All that a woman asks, Constantine, is to be looked at kindly. I know it myself. . . .

[CONSTANTINE *rises and leaves the room silently*]

MASHA. Now you've made him angry. Why couldn't you leave him alone?

PAULINE. I'm so sorry for you, Masha.

MASHA. No need, thank you.

PAULINE. My heart aches again for you. I see it all; I understand it all.

MASHA. Bah! Hopeless love only exists in novels. Rubbish! One only has to keep oneself in hand, and not to sit waiting and waiting for what can never come. If love strikes root in one's heart, one must turn it out. Well, they've promised to transfer Simeon to another district. Once we get there I shall forget everything; I will tear it out by the roots.

[*A melancholy waltz is played two rooms away*]

PAULINE. There's Constantine playing. That means he's unhappy.

MASHA [*silently dancing a few turns to the waltz*]. The chief thing is not to have him always before one's eyes. If only they will transfer my Simeon. Once we're there I shall forget him in a month. This is all fiddlesticks.

[*Enter* DORN *and* MEDVEDENKO, *left, wheeling* SORIN *in a chair*]

MEDVEDENKO. I have six mouths in the house to feed now. And flour's four and sixpence a hundredweight.

DORN. You won't get much change out of that.

MEDVEDENKO. Ah! It's all very well for you to laugh. You're rolling in money.

DORN. Rolling in money? After thirty years of practice, my dear fellow, thirty years of anxious practice, during which I could never call my soul my own day or night, all that I managed to scrape together was two hundred pounds, and that I spent when I went abroad just lately. I haven't a farthing.

MASHA [*to* MEDVEDENKO]. So you've not gone yet?

MEDVEDENKO [*apologetically*]. How can I, if they won't let me have a horse?

MASHA [*murmuring, bitterly*]. I wish my eyes might never light on you again!

[SORIN'S *chair is placed on the left side of the stage.* PAULINE, MASHA *and* DORN *sit by it.* MEDVEDENKO, *downcast, goes apart*]

DORN. Why, what a lot of changes you've been making. You've turned the drawing-room into a study.

MASHA. It's more convenient for Constantine Gavrilitch to work here. When he feels inclined he can go out into the garden to think.

[*The watchman beats his board outside*]

SORIN. Where's Irene?

DORN. Gone to the station to meet Trigórin. She'll be back immediately.

SORIN. If you thought it necessary to send for my sister to come, I must be dangerously ill. [*A pause*] It's too bad, here am I dangerously ill and nobody will give me any medicine!

DORN. Well, what medicine do you want? Valerian drops? Soda? Quinine?

SORIN. Oh! more philosophy, I suppose. It's simply the devil! [*Nodding at the divan*] Is that laid for me?

PAULINE. Yes, it's for you, Peter Nikolayevitch.

SORIN. Many thanks.

DORN [*singing*]. "The moon swims by in the clouds of night."

SORIN. I shall give Constantine a subject for a story. It's to be called,

"The Man who wanted to," "*L'homme qui a voulu.*" When I was a young man I wanted to be a writer, and I didn't become one; I wanted to be a good speaker, and was a vile one. [*Mimicking himself*] "And, er, so to speak, er, as I was saying. . . ." And my perorations that went on and on, till one was bathed in perspiration. . . . I wanted to marry, and remained a bachelor; I wanted to live and die in town, and here I am ending my days in the country and all the rest of it.

DORN. You wanted to be made an Actual State Councillor,[1] and you were.

SORIN [*laughing*]. I never tried for that. It came of its own accord.

DORN. To express dissatisfaction with life at sixty-two, you must confess, is ungenerous.

SORIN. What a pigheaded fellow you are! Don't you understand? I want to *live!*

DORN. That's frivolous. By the laws of nature every life must come to an end.

SORIN. You talk as a man who has had his fill. You're sated and therefore indifferent to life; it's all the same to you. But even you will be afraid of death.

DORN. The fear of death is an animal fear. One ought to repress it. The only people who are consciously afraid of death are those who believe in eternal life; they are frightened by the knowledge of their sins. But you, in the first place, you're an unbeliever, and in the second, what sins can you have on your mind? You've served twenty-five years in the Law Courts, nothing more.

SORIN [*laughing*]. Twenty-eight.

[*Enter* TREPLEF, *and sits on a footstool at* SORIN'S *feet.* MASHA *cannot keep her eyes off him*]

DORN. We are preventing Constantine Gavrilovitch from working.

TREPLEF. No. It's all right. [*A pause*]

MEDVEDENKO. Allow me to ask you, doctor, what town pleased you most abroad?

DORN. Genoa.

TREPLEF. Why Genoa?

DORN. The crowd in the streets is so charming in Genoa. If you go out from your hotel in the evening you find the whole street overflowing with people. You go about aimlessly in the crowd, zigzagging to and fro, you live with its life, you fuse your individuality with its, and you begin to believe that a Universal Spirit is really possible, like that one that Nina Zarétchnaya once acted in your play. By the by, where *is* Nina Zarétchnaya? How's she getting on?

TREPLEF. She's quite well, I imagine.

DORN. I was told she was living some curious sort of life. What was it?

TREPLEF. It's a long story, doctor.

DORN. Well, make it a short one. [*A pause*]

TREPLEF. She ran away from home and went to Trigórin. That you know.

DORN. Yes, I know.

TREPLEF. She had a baby. The baby died. Trigórin got tired of her and went back to his old ties, as one might have expected. Besides, he never gave up his old ties, but, like the backboneless creature he is, managed to carry on with both at the same time. As far as I can make out from what I've heard, Nina's private life has been disastrous.

DORN. And on the stage?

TREPLEF. Still worse, I should say. She came out first at a summer theatre near Moscow, and then went off to the provinces. I kept her in sight for some time and followed her wherever she went. She was always trying to do big parts, but acted crudely and inartistically, mouthing her words and making awkward gestures. There were moments when she showed some talent in screaming and dying, but they were only moments.

DORN. Still, you think she has some gift for it?

TREPLEF. It was hard to make out. I should think so, certainly. I saw her, but she refused to see me, and the servants wouldn't let me into her rooms. I understood her mood and did not insist on an interview. [*A pause*] What else is there to tell you? Afterwards, when I got back home, I used to get letters from her, nice, friendly, interesting letters; she didn't complain, but I could see that she was profoundly unhappy; in every line one felt her strained and tortured nerves. Her imagination was a little disordered. She signed herself "Sea-gull." In

[1] *Actual State Councillor.* See the note to Act I., p. 202.

"Rusalka"[1] the miller says he is a crow; so she said in her letters that she was a sea-gull. And now she's here.

DORN. How do you mean, here?

TREPLEF. Down in the town, at an inn. She's been in rooms there five or six days. I drove in in the hope of seeing her. Marya Ilyinitchna[2] [*indicating* MASHA] went too, but she won't see anyone. Medvédenko declares he saw her crossing the fields yesterday afternoon, a mile and a half from here.

MEDVEDENKO. Yes, I saw her. She was going the other way, towards the town. I took off my hat and asked why she didn't come and stay with us. She said she would.

TREPLEF. She won't. [*A pause*] Her father and stepmother refuse to know her. They've put watchmen everywhere to prevent her even getting near the grounds. [TREPLEF *and* DORN *go to the writing-table*] How easy it is to be a philosopher on paper, doctor, and how hard it is in real life!

SORIN. What a charming girl she was!

DORN. Eh, what?

SORIN. I say what a charming girl she was. His Excellency Councillor Sórin was in love with her for a time.

DORN. Old Don Juan!

[SHAMRAYEF'S *laugh is heard without*]

PAULINE. It sounds as if they were back from the station.

TREPLEF. Yes, I can hear mother.

[*Enter* ARCADINA *and* TRIGORIN, SHAMRAYEF *following*]

SHAMRAYEF [*as he enters*]. We all grow old and battered under the influence of the elements, but you, dear lady, are as young as ever, with your lovely frocks, such life, such grace. . . .

ARCADINA. You want to bewitch me with praise again, you tiresome man!

TRIGORIN [*to* SORIN]. How do you do, Peter Nikolayevitch? What do you mean by being ill? It's very wrong of you. [*Seeing* MASHA, *delighted*] Marya Ilyinitchna!

MASHA. Not forgotten me? [*Shaking hands*]

TRIGORIN. Married?

MASHA. Long ago.

TRIGORIN. Happy? [*Salutes* DORN *and* MEDVEDENKO, *then goes irresolutely towards* TREPLEF] Irina Nikolayevna[3] said that you had overlooked the past and forgiven me.

[TREPLEF *gives him his hand*]

ARCADINA [*to her son*]. Trigórin has brought the magazine with your new story.

TREPLEF [*taking the magazine; to* TRIGORIN] Many thanks. You're very kind. [*They both sit*]

TRIGORIN. Your admirers send you their respects. . . . People in Moscow and St. Petersburg are interested in you; I am always being asked about you. They want to know what you look like, how old you are, dark or fair. For some reason or other they all imagine that you're no longer young. And nobody knows your real name, of course, as you write under a *nom de plume*. You're a mystery, like the Man in the Iron Mask.

TREPLEF. Have you come for long?

TRIGORIN. No, I mean to go to Moscow to-morrow. I can't stop. I'm trying to get a novel finished, and then I've promised to write something for an annual. In fact, it's the old story.

[*While they are talking* ARCADINA *and* PAULINE *bring a card-table to the middle of the room and open it;* SHAMRAYEF *lights the candles and brings chairs. Things for a game of loto are brought from a cupboard*]

TRIGORIN. Your weather welcomes me here in the most inhospitable manner. It's a cruel wind. To-morrow morning, if it goes down, I shall go and fish in the lake. And I want to look round the garden and see the place where your play was acted, you remember? I've got a subject ready for writing; I want to refresh my memory as to the scene of action.

MASHA [*to* SHAMRAYEF]. Papa, will you let Simeon have a horse? He's got to go home.

SHAMRAYEF [*ironical*]. A horse! Go home! [*Severely*] Didn't you see for yourself, the horses have just been to the station? They can't go out again.

MASHA. But they're not the only ones. . . . [*Seeing that her father won't*

[1] *Rusalka.* Pushkin's poem; more likely to be known to the reader as Dargomyzhsky's opera. *Rusalka* is Russian for a nixie.

[2] Ilyinitchna, daughter of Ilyá, or Elias, Shamráyef's Christian name.

[3] *I.e.* Madame Arcádina.

answer, she makes a gesture of breaking off] You're all more trouble than you're worth!

MEDVEDENKO. I'll do it on foot, Masha. It's all right. . . .

PAULINE [*sighing*]. On foot, in weather like this. . . . [*Seating herself at the card-table*] Now come along, everyone.

MEDVEDENKO. It's not more than four miles. . . . Good-bye [*kissing his wife's hand*]. Good-bye, mother. [PAULINE, *his mother-in-law, unwillingly gives him her hand to kiss*] I wouldn't have troubled anyone, only the baby. . .

[*He bows to the company*] Good-bye.

[*Exit, with a guilty air*]

SHAMRAYEF. He'll get there right enough. He's not a general.

PAULINE [*rapping on the table*]. Now then, come along. Don't let's waste time; they'll be calling us to supper very soon.

[SHAMRAYEF, MASHA *and* DORN *sit at the card-table*]

ARCADINA [*to* TRIGORIN]. When the long autumn evenings begin we always play loto here. Just look; the old loto-set that we used to play with with mother, when we were children. Won't you have a game with us till supper-time? [*She and* TRIGORIN *sit at the card-table*] It's a tedious game, but it's all right when you're used to it. [*She deals three cards to each*]

TREPLEF [*looking through the magazine*]. He's read his own story and hasn't even cut mine. [*Puts magazine on writing-table, then goes to the door left; as he passes his mother he kisses her on the head*]

ARCADINA. Aren't you coming, Constantine?

TREPLEF. No, thanks; I don't feel like it. I'm going for a turn round the house.

[*Exit*]

ARCADINA. The stake's twopence. Put in for me, doctor.

DORN. Very good, mum.

MASHA. Everybody put in? I begin. . . . Twenty-two!

ARCADINA. Yes.

MASHA. Three!

DORN. Here you are.

MASHA. Have you marked three? Eight! Eighty-one! Ten!

SHAMRAYEF. Not so quick.

ARCADINA. Such a reception I had at Kharkof! Saints in heaven! My head still goes round with it.

MASHA. Thirty-four!

[*A melancholy waltz behind the scenes*]

ARCADINA. The students gave me quite an ovation. Three baskets of flowers, two bouquets, and look at that!

[*Taking a brooch from her bosom and throwing it on the table*]

SHAMRAYEF. Why, that's no end of a . . .

MASHA. Fifty!

DORN. Five O.

ARCADINA. I was wearing a charming frock . . . my frocks are one of my strong points.

PAULINE [*listening to the music*]. Do hear Constantine? He's unhappy, poor lamb.

SHAMRAYEF. They abuse him a good deal in the papers.

MASHA. Seventy-seven!

ARCADINA. Who cares for the papers!

TRIGORIN. He has no luck. He can't somehow get into his natural stride. There's always something queer and vague about it, almost like delirium at times. Never a single living character.

MASHA. Eleven!

ARCADINA [*looking round at* SORIN]. Are you bored, Peter? [*A pause*] He's asleep.

DORN. The Actual State Councillor is asleep.

MASHA. Seven! Ninety!

TRIGORIN. If I lived in a country house like this, by a lake, do you think I would ever write another line? I would conquer the passion and spend my whole time fishing.

MASHA. Twenty-eight!

TRIGORIN. To catch a roach or a perch . . . what bliss![1]

DORN. For my part, I believe in Constantine. He'll do something. He'll do something! He thinks in pictures, his stories are bright and full of color; I feel them very deeply. It's a pity only that he has no definite purpose before his eyes. He produces an impression and there he stops; producing impressions won't take you very far. Are you glad you've a son who is a writer, Irina Nikolayevna?

ARCADINA. Fancy, I've never read a line of his. I never have time.

[1] *Cf.* "Letters," p. 82. "To catch a *sudak!* . . . It is nobler and sweeter than love."

MASHA. Twenty-six!

[*Enter* TREPLEF *quietly; he goes to his table*]

SHAMRAYEF [*to* TRIGORIN]. We've still got that thing of yours, Boris Alexéyevitch.

TRIGORIN. What thing?

SHAMRAYEF. Constantine Gavrilitch shot a sea-gull one day, and you asked me to have it stuffed for you.

TRIGORIN. Did I? [*Meditating*] I don't remember.

MASHA. Sixty-six! One!

TREPLEF [*opening the window and listening*]. How dark it is! I wonder why I feel so uneasy. . . .

ARCADINA. Shut the window, dear; it makes a draught. [TREPLEF *shuts it*]

MASHA. Eighty-eight!

TRIGORIN. Ha, ha! I've won.

ARCADINA [*gaily*]. Well done! Well done!

SHAMRAYEF. Bravo.

ARCADINA. Trigórin is always lucky wherever he goes. [*Rising*] And now let's go and get something to eat. The eminent novelist has had no dinner to-day. We'll go on after supper. Constantine, put your writing away and come to supper.

TREPLEF. I don't want anything, thanks, mother. I'm not hungry.

ARCADINA. As you please. [*Waking* SORIN] Supper-time, Peter. [*Taking* SHAMRAYEF'S *arm*] I will tell you all about my reception at Kharkof.

[PAULINE *puts out the candles on the card-table; she and* DORN *wheel* SORIN'S *chair. Exeunt omnes, left.* TREPLEF *remains alone at his writing-table*]

TREPLEF [*preparing to write; reads through what he has already written*]. I have talked so much about new formulæ, and now I feel that I'm slipping back little by little into the old commonplaces. [*Reading*] "The placard on the hoarding informed the public . . ." "Her pale face framed in masses of dark hair . . ." "Informed the public," "Framed in masses" . . . How cheap![1] [*Scratching out*] I'll begin with the hero being woken by the sound of the rain, and throw the rest overboard. The description of the moonlight night is tedious and artificial. Trigórin has worked himself out a method, it's easy for him. The neck of a broken bottle glimmering on the mill-dam and the black shadow of the water-wheel, and there's your moonlight night complete; but here am I with my tremulous rays and the twinkling stars and the distant sound of a piano fainting on the perfumed air. . . . It's frightful! [*A pause*] Yes, I'm coming more and more to the conclusion that it doesn't matter whether the formulæ are new or old; a man's got to write without thinking of form at all, just because it flows naturally out of his soul. [*Someone knocks at the window by the table*] What's that? [*Looking out*] I don't see anything. [*Opens the glass door and looks into the garden*] Someone ran down the steps. [*Calling*] Who's there? [*Goes out; walks quickly along the veranda outside, and returns a moment later with* NINA ZARETCHNAYA] Nina! Nina! [NINA *lays her head on his bosom and sobs restrainedly*] [*With emotion*] Nina! Nina! Is it you? is it you? I had a sort of presentiment; all day my heart has been in anguish. [*Takes off her hat and cloak*[2]] Oh, my dearest, my loveliest! She has come at last! We mustn't cry, we mustn't cry!

NINA. Is there anyone here?

TREPLEF. No one.

NINA. Lock the door; they may come in.

TREPLEF. No one will come in.

NINA. I know that Irina Nikolayevna is here. Lock the door.

TREPLEF [*locks the door right and goes to the door left*] There's no lock on this one. I'll put a chair against it. [*Puts an armchair against the door*] Don't be afraid, no one will come in.

NINA [*looking him hard in the face*]. Let me look at you. [*Looking round the room*] How warm and cosy. . . . This used to be the drawing-room. Am I much changed?

TREPLEF. Yes. You're thinner and your eyes are bigger. Nina, how strange it is to see you at last! Why would you not let me in when I visited you? Why have you not come before? I know you have been here nearly a

[1] Constantine criticises himself almost in the same words as Tchekhoff once criticised a young writer, Zhirkévitch, who had sent him one of his stories in manuscript. "It is only ladies who nowadays write, 'the placard informed the public,' 'her face framed in hair'" ("Letters," p. 208).

[2] *Cloak*: strictly speaking, her "talma"; the word is English too; a sort of big cape named after the tragedian.

week. I've been to the inn several times every day and stood under your window like a beggar.

NINA. I was afraid you must hate me. I dream every night that you look at me and do not recognise me. If only you knew! Every day since I came I've been walking up here by the lake. I've been so often near the house but did not dare to come in. Let's sit down. [*They sit*] Let's sit here and talk and talk. How pleasant it is here, how warm and comfortable. . . . Do you hear the wind? There's a passage in Turgenef: "Blessed is he who sits beneath a roof on such a night, in his own comfortable corner." I am a sea-gull. No, that's wrong. [*Rubs her forehead*] What was I saying? Yes . . . Turgénef. . . . "And the Lord help all homeless wanderers." . . . I'm all right. [*Sobbing*]

TREPLEF. Nina! you're crying again. . . . Nina!

NINA. I'm all right. I feel the better for it . . . I haven't cried for two years. Yesterday evening I came into the garden to see if our stage was still standing. It's still there. I cried for the first time in two years, and felt relieved, and easier in my mind. See, I'm not crying any more. [*Taking his hand*] So you've become a writer. You're a writer and I'm an actress. We're both caught up in the vortex. Once I lived so happily, with a child's happiness; I would wake of a morning and sing with glee; I loved you and dreamed of fame; and now? Early to-morrow morning I must travel to Yeletz,[1] third class, with peasants, and at Yeletz I shall have to put up with the attentions of the educated shopkeepers. . . . How brutal life is!

TREPLEF. Why Yeletz?

NINA. I've accepted an engagement for the whole winter. I must start to-morrow.

TREPLEF. Nina. I cursed you and hated you at first; I tore up your letters and your photographs; but all the time I knew that my heart was bound to you for ever. Try as I may, I cannot cease loving you, Nina. Ever since I lost you and began to get my stories printed, my life has been intolerable. How I have suffered! . . . My youth was snatched from me, as it were, and I feel as if I had lived for ninety years. I call to you; I kiss the ground where you have passed; wherever I look I see your face with that caressing smile which shone upon me in the best years of my life. . . .

NINA [*wildly*]. Why does he say that? Why does he say that?

TREPLEF. I am alone in the world, unwarmed by any affection; it chills me like a dungeon, and whatever I write is hollow, dull and gloomy. Stay here, Nina, I beseech you, or let me come away with you! [NINA *puts on her hat and cloak quickly*] Nina, why are you doing that? For God's sake, Nina . . . [*He watches her putting on her things*] [*A pause*]

NINA. My trap is at the garden gate. Don't come and see me out. I'll manage all right. [*Crying*] Give me some water.

TREPLEF [*giving her water*]. Where are you going to?

NINA. Back to the town. [*A pause*] Is Irina Nikolayevna here?

TREPLEF. Yes. . . . Uncle Peter was taken ill on Thursday; we wired for her to come.

NINA. Why do you say you kissed the ground where I had walked? You ought to kill me. [*Leaning against the table*] Oh, I am so tired! If I could only rest . . . if I could only rest. [*Raising her head*] I am a sea-gull . . . no, that's wrong. I am an actress. Yes, yes. [*Hearing* ARCADINA *and* TRIGORIN *laughing, she listens, then runs to the door right and looks through the keyhole*] So he's here too! . . . [*Coming back to* TREPLEF] Yes, yes. . . . I'm all right. . . . He didn't believe in the stage; he always laughed at my ambitions; little by little I came not to believe in it either; I lost heart. . . . And on the top of that the anxieties of love, jealousy, perpetual fear for the child . . . I became trivial and commonplace; I acted without meaning . . . I did not know what to do with my hands, or how to stand on the stage; I had no control over my voice. You can't imagine how you feel when you know that you are acting atrociously. I am a sea-gull. No, that's wrong. . . . Do you remember, you shot a sea-gull? "A man comes along by chance and sees her, and, just to amuse himself, ruins her. . . . A subject for a short story." . . . No, that's not it. . . .

[1] *Yeletz.* A little old town in Central Russia, now growing brisk and commercial, with "residential suburbs." It is like being booked for a season at Norwich or Shrewsbury.

[*Rubbing her forehead*] What was I talking about? . . . Ah, about acting. I'm not like that now . . . I'm a real actress now. When I act I rejoice, I delight in it; I am intoxicated and feel that I am splendid. Since I got here I have been walking all the time and thinking, thinking and feeling how my inner strength grows day by day . . . and now I see at last, Constantine, that in our sort of work, whether we are actors or writers, the chief thing is not fame or glory, not what I dreamed of, but the gift of patience. One must bear one's cross and have faith. My faith makes me suffer less, and when I think of my vocation I am no longer afraid of life.

TREPLEF [*sadly*]. You have found your road, you know where you are going; but I am still adrift in a welter of images and dreams, and cannot tell what use it all is to anyone. I have no faith and I do not know what my vocation is.

NINA [*listening*]. 'Sh. . . . I'm going. Good-bye. When I am a great actress, come and see me act. You promise? And now . . . [*Shaking his hand*] It's late. I can hardly stand up, I'm so tired and hungry. . . .

TREPLEF. Stay here. I'll get you some supper.

NINA. No, no. Don't see me out; I can find my way. The trap is quite near. . . . So she brought him here with her? Well, well, it's all one. When you see Trigórin don't tell him I've been. . . . I love him; yes, I love him more than ever. . . . "A subject for a short story." . . . I love him, love him passionately, desperately. How pleasant it was in the old days, Constantine! You remember? How clear and warm, how joyful and how pure our life was! And our feelings — they were like the sweetest, daintiest flowers. . . . You remember? [*Reciting*] "Men and lions, eagles and partridges, antlered deer, geese, spiders, the silent fishes dwelling in the water, starfish and tiny creatures invisible to the eye — these and every form of life, ay, every form of life, have ended their melancholy round and become extinct. Thousands of centuries have passed since this earth bore any living being on its bosom. All in vain does yon pale moon light her lamp. No longer do the cranes wake and cry in the meadows; the hum of the cockchafers is silent in the linden groves. . . ." [*She embraces* TREPLEF *impulsively and runs out by the glass door*]

TREPLEF [*after a pause*]. I hope nobody will meet her in the garden and tell mother. Mother might be annoyed. . . .

[*For two minutes he silently tears up all his manuscripts and throws them under the table, then unlocks the door right, and exit*]

DORN [*trying to open the door right*]. Funny. It seems to be locked. . . . [*Entering and putting back the armchair in its place*] H'm, obstacle race.

[*Enter* ARCADINA *and* PAULINE; *behind them* YAKOF, *with bottles, and* MASHA; *then* SHAMRAYEF *and* TRIGORIN]

ARCADINA. Put the claret and beer here on the table for Boris Alexéyevitch. We'll drink while we play. Now come along and sit down, all of you.

PAULINE [*to* YAKOF]. And bring tea at once. [*Lighting the candles and sitting at the card-table*]

SHAMRAYEF [*taking* TRIGORIN *to the cupboard*]. There's the thing I was talking of. . . . [*Gets a stuffed sea-gull out*] You asked to have it done.

TRIGORIN [*looking at the sea-gull*]. I don't remember. [*After thinking*] No, I don't remember.

[*Report of a pistol behind the scenes, right. Everyone starts*]

ARCADINA [*alarmed*]. What's that?

DORN. It's all right. I expect something's busted in my travelling medicine-chest. Don't be alarmed. [*Exit right, and returns a moment later*] As I expected. My ether bottle's burst. [*Singing*] "Once more, once more before thee, love."

ARCADINA [*sitting at the table*]. Good heavens, I was quite frightened. It reminded me of that time when . . . [*Covering her face with her hands*] I felt quite faint. . . .

DORN [*taking up* TREPLEF'S *magazine and turning over the pages; to* TRIGORIN]. There was an article in this paper a month or two ago . . . a letter from America, and I wanted to ask you, among other things . . . [*Puts his arm round* TRIGORIN'S *waist and brings him to the footlights*] . . . I'm very much interested in the question . . . [*In a lower tone*] Get Irina Nikolayevna away from here. The fact is, Constantine has shot himself. . . .

THE END

THE LIFE OF MAN

(*1906*)

By Leonid Andreyeff

LEONID ANDREYEFF AND "THE LIFE OF MAN"

Like Tchekhoff, Andreyeff has to be studied from several angles. His approach cannot be otherwise measured than by a careful survey of his stories and his plays together; in addition to which he was a constant writer about the theatre, and in his letters illuminated his entire attitude by significant outbursts and explanations. It is fortunate that this correspondence is about to be translated, and we may expect from it a value similar to that found in the letters of Tchekhoff — self-revelatory vehemencies. Slowly, Andreyeff is being translated for the English reader, but we are getting the plays from various hands, though it seems that Mr. Herman Bernstein is the authorized translator, and the one into whose possession has fallen the manuscript of the letters. It is he who translated "The Waltz of the Dogs", and who has just published "Samson in Chains"; and, though the Theatre Guild of New York used a version of "He Who Gets Slapped", made by Gregory Zilboorg, it was to Mr. Bernstein they had to turn for final rights.

"The Life of Man" has been translated by Mr. Thomas Seltzer, and this I use; but there is another version in the Meader and Scott edition. When published in 1906, it was read with avidity, but resulted in quandary, since it let slip the details of ordinary existence, and lavished attention on symbolism. You find in Andreyeff burning, bitter irony, where in Tchekhoff there is the ironic humor of a less personal intensity. There is definiteness of symbol in "The Life of Man", as there is in the morality, "Everyman"; a want of definiteness in "He Who Gets Slapped."

Like Tchekhoff, Andreyeff developed under the friendship of Gorky, and these three are the significant band of moderns who carried Russian literature into channels so different from those of Dostoievsky and Turgenieff. Like Tchekhoff, Andreyeff was accustomed often to write vivid dramatic sketches, similar to the one included in my "Representative One-Act Plays by Continental Authors." Few biographical facts are necessary to convey an outline of his life.

Andreyeff, Andreyev, or Andreev, was born August 9, 1871, at Orel, at a distance of two hundred miles south of Moscow, and was graduated there from the gymnasium. His father died while he was at the High School, and Leonid went hungry while studying law at the University of Petrograd. At the age of twenty-six, he graduated from the University of Moscow, having the while maintained himself by painting portraits. At an early age in his career he attempted suicide.

With an acute mind, his insatiable love for reading took him through classic Russian literature and the classics of other countries. In 1897, by the time he was ready to practice law, his inclinations were pledged in other directions. He had no success at the bar, so he undertook newspaper reporting for the Moscow *Courier*, and a story published therein attracted to him the admiration of Maxim Gorky. Such pieces of fiction as "The Abyss" and "In the Fog" won him widespread recognition.

Mr. Seltzer writes: "In 1905, at the time Maxim Gorky was arrested on political charges, Andreyeff suffered imprisonment for the same reasons. Yet we are told that he strove to keep himself aloof from specific politics, and he gained influence as a writer by dealing with those problems vital to Russian society, by showing an artistry, a sincere manner which all the more carried with it censure because of his burning intensity. Critics saw in his written word implied criticism.

"He lived in the maelstrom of Russia's fight for liberty, and, in his stories and plays, symbolized the aspiration of the human soul. People read him unfailingly. 'King Hunger' sold eighteen thousand copies in a single day. In 1906, he deserted city life, and built himself a home at Terioki, thirty miles from Petrograd. Here, both realism and symbolism became his outlets. The list of plays accredited to him will measure the extent of his activity."

Andreyeff died in 1919.

In life Andreyeff rose above fact: he had a spiritual fight to make for the liberty of man and the freedom of Russia. He was a vigorous force, a huge personality, and, unlike Tchekhoff, did not in his later years have to struggle for a livelihood. He was naïvely lavish with his wealth. In January, 1910, he wrote:

"I have sold my literary works, and now I am a capitalist, something like Rothschild or the Devil. I am thinking of opening a pawn-shop. I bought a new cap, a cigarette lighter that does not work in the wind, and I have motion-pictures in my country house. And to think that there was a time when I, a capitalist, like Rothschild, Morgan or Rockefeller, or like a railroad king (I always travel in the first class) was in need of a trifling advance of about three or four millions! Don't you know some solid enterprise in which I could invest my capital? I have been advised about a certain enterprise — they are making rabbits out of cats, but I am afraid — it is not a solid business. Is Zinaida M. married? I should like to marry her. How much do the cathedrals of Moscow cost? I want to buy a couple of cathedrals and a few new ones."

Through the courtesy of Mr. Bernstein, I am able to give herewith some excerpts from a few of the letters that have appeared in magazine form under the title, "Leonid Andreyev as a Critic of His Own Plays". Thus he writes of his own significance:

"I shall never be understood by him whose soul is calm and comfortable, whose heart is covered with fat, whose hearing is directed to the external only, who never listened to the voice within, who never heard the clanking of swords, the voices of madness and of pain, the wild noise of the great battle whose arena has been the soul of man from time immemorial. I shall never be understood by him who never kindled a light in the tower of his mind or heart, who never illuminated the road on which strange guests were approaching, and who did not understand that great mystery of existence in which darkness comes at the call of the flame — those dark, cold beings that know neither God nor Satan, the shade of shades, the beginning of beginnings; born of light, they love light, they are drawn to light and they inevitably extinguish it. I do not want to add a single word for him who does not understand and who will never understand me. And for those who do understand, additional words are — superfluous." . . . (1910).

Andreyeff's pessimism outwardly, his intensely turbulent spirit inwardly, partly induced by the War, partly the general pessimism of the artist, with vibrant desire, are seen in the following, written after the completion of "Samson in Chains", January, 1915:

"It may be that after tragedy is felt in life, it will also be revived on the stage. Then 'Samson in Chains' will seem different. Now it is out of place, an untimely guest. 'We must pray, Pharaoh! It is essential that even the stones in the temple shall pray and be as hot as fire. But what is this? Samson will come, and he will hear the silence of the stones, and the temple will seem to him empty, devoid of God — and who will then halt his hand, if he should raise it against you?'

"But while waiting for the stones to turn hot, I feel miserable. All my spiritual being is concentrated on tragedy — and I am alone, like a finger in a torn glove — all the other fingers feel warm, while this one is cold, even though it sees the sky. . . .

"I shall not speak of the theatres now. You know their repertoire; comedy, farce, drama, drama, drama. There is no tragedy there, but since they cannot get along without tragedy, as without the Holy Ghost, they introduce into the drama little bits of tragedy, simplified and adapted for the toothless, like cutlets of chopped meat. 'Come down to earth! Come down to earth!' This is the slogan of our times in Russia, and for that matter throughout the bourgeois world — and almost everybody follows it.

"At this time there is a tragedy being enacted in only one great theatre — and that is the war. But see with what anguish and aversion its tragic forms and essence are received, how quickly a thousand little theatres are trying to drown the voice of Sinai in the squeaking of Punch and Judy! With the fury of frightened hens they try to offset the war's wild power and stern challenge by their own little dramas and comedies. Accursed war, you may be as tragic as you like — they seem to say — but we will crush you with our drama and farce. We will break you down with our 'Crooked Mirror', and spit upon you in 'The Bat'.[1] Under the pretext of love for pure art, they turn away from books and works about the war. In unclean gossip about some ragged drunkards or cowards, they strive with all their might to drown the voice of the war. . . .

"I say all this in connection with my 'Samson in Chains.' How can a theatre produce it under these terrible circumstances? Who needs it? Who will go to see it? Where would they find the necessary strength even to feel Samson? Oh, if it were only an ordinary Samson Ilvitch living with an ordinary Delilah Savishna — just a spicy sex problem — then the soul of the actor would stir like an awakened eagle, and the audience too would grow 'emotional.' But here is — God! Sinai! A prophet! Who wants it?". . . (February, 1915.)

The virility of Andreyeff's personality is seen in his overwhelming faith in his own work, always written with a burning sense of responsibility, never casually; always with the note of challenge, never with spiritual smugness.

But there was the other side of him which thus had to be sacrificed. He exclaims: "I am by nature not a fighter at all; I love peace and quiet family life." This conviction of rightness is no better seen than after the completion of "The Waltz of the Dogs." "In this work," he confesses, "my entire self is expressed. I have faith in it, I respect it, as an honest worker must respect his honest and successful achievement; and even if God Himself were to say to me that this work is poor, I would not believe Him. For if I believed that it is poor, I could not live at all. I would be through." . . . (October 7, 1916.)

[1] Meaning, of course, Balieff's *Chauve-Souris.*

THE LIFE OF MAN

(*ZHIZN CHELOVIEKA*)

(*1906*)

A PLAY IN FIVE SCENES, WITH A PROLOGUE

By LEONID ANDREYEFF

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN
BY THOMAS SELTZER

Copyright, 1914,
BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

TO THE BRIGHT MEMORY OF MY FRIEND, MY WIFE

I DEDICATE THIS COMPOSITION

THE LAST

ON WHICH WE WORKED TOGETHER

PERSONS

Someone in Gray Called He
Man
His Wife
Man's { Father, Relatives, Neighbors, Friends, Enemies, Guests, Servants }
Musicians
Physicians
A Bartender
Drunkards
Old Women

Prologue — *Someone in Gray called He, speaking of the Life of Man*
Scene I. — *The Birth of Man and the Mother's Travail*
Scene II. — *Love and Poverty*
Scene III. — *Wealth. Man's Ball*
Scene IV. — *Man's Misfortune*
Scene V. — *The Death of Man*

THE LIFE OF MAN

PROLOGUE

SOMEONE IN GRAY CALLED HE, SPEAKING OF THE LIFE OF MAN

A large, rectangular space resembling a room without doors or windows and quite empty. Everything is gray, monocolored, drab — the walls gray, and the ceiling, and the floor. A feeble, even light enters from some invisible source. It too is gray, monotonous, spectral, producing neither lights nor shadows.

SOMEONE IN GRAY *moves noiselessly away from the wall, close against which He has been standing. He wears a broad, gray, formless smock, vaguely outlining the contours of His body; and a hat of the same gray throws the upper part of His face into heavy shadow. His eyes are invisible. All that is seen are His cheekbones, His nose, and His chin, which is massive, heavy, and blunt, as if hewn out of rock. His lips are pressed tight together. Raising His head slightly, He begins to speak in a firm, cold, unemotional, unimpassioned voice, like a reader hired by the hour reading the Book of Fate with brutal indifference.*

SOMEONE IN GRAY. Look and listen, you who have come here to laugh and be amused. There will pass before you the whole life of Man, from his dark beginning to his dark ending. Previously non-existent, mysteriously hidden in the infiniteness of time, neither feeling nor thinking, and known to no one, he will mysteriously break through the prison of non-being and with a cry announce the beginning of his brief life. In the night of non-existence a light will go up, kindled by an unseen hand. It is the life of Man. Behold the flame — it is the life of Man.

Being born, he will take the form and the name of Man, and in all things will become like other men already living. And their hard lot will be his lot, and his hard lot will be the lot of all human beings. Inexorably impelled by time, he will, with inevitable necessity, pass through all the stages of human life, from the bottom to the top, from the top to the bottom. Limited in vision, he will never see the next step which his unsteady foot, poised in the air, is in the very act of taking. Limited in knowledge, he will never know what the coming day will bring, or the coming hour, or the coming minute. In his unseeing blindness, troubled by premonitions, agitated by hope and fear, he will submissively complete the iron-traced circle foreordained.

Behold him a happy youth. See how brightly the candle burns. From boundless stretches of space the icy wind blows, circling, careering, and tossing the flame. In vain. Bright and clear the candle burns. Yet the wax is dwindling, consumed by the fire. Yet the wax is dwindling.

Behold him a happy husband and father. But see how strangely dim and faint the candle burns, as if the yellowing flame were wrinkling, as if it were shivering with cold and were creeping into concealment. The wax is melting, consumed by the fire. The wax is melting.

Behold him an old man, ill and feeble. The stages of life are already ended. In their stead nothing but a black void. Yet he drags on with palsied limbs. The flame, now turned blue, bends to the ground and crawls along, trembling and falling, trembling and falling. Then it goes out quietly.

Thus Man will die. Coming from the night, he will return to the night and go out, leaving no trace behind. He will

pass into the infinity of time, neither thinking nor feeling, and known to no one. And I, whom all call He, shall remain the faithful companion of Man throughout his life, on all his pathways. Unseen by him, I shall be constantly at hand when he wakes and when he sleeps, when he prays and when he curses. In his hours of joy, when his spirit, free and bold, rises aloft; in his hours of grief and despair, when his soul clouds over with mortal pain and sorrow, and the blood congeals in his heart; in the hours of victory and defeat; in the hours of great strife with the immutable, I shall be with him — I shall be with him.

And you who have come here to be amused, you who are consecrated to death, look and listen. There will pass before you, like a distant phantom echo, the fleet-moving life of Man with its sorrows and its joys.

[SOMEONE IN GRAY *turns silent. The light goes out, and He and the gray, empty room are enveloped in darkness*]

THE FIRST SCENE

THE BIRTH OF MAN AND THE MOTHER'S TRAVAIL

Profound darkness; not a stir. Like a swarm of mice in hiding, the gray silhouettes of OLD WOMEN *in strange headgear are dimly discerned; also vaguely the outline of a large, lofty room. The* OLD WOMEN *carry on a conversation in low, mocking voices.*

OLD WOMEN'S CONVERSATION. I wonder whether it'll be a boy or a girl.

— What difference does it make to you?

— I like boys.

— I like girls. They always sit at home waiting till you call on them.

— Do you like to go visiting?

[THE OLD WOMEN *titter*]

— He knows.

— He knows. [*Silence*]

— Our friend would like to have a girl. She says boys are so restless and venturesome and are always seeking danger. Even when they are little, they like to climb tall trees and bathe in deep water. They often fall, and they drown. And when they get to be men, they make wars and kill one another.

— She thinks girls don't drown. I have seen many girls drowned. They look like all drowned people, wet and green.

— She thinks girls don't get killed by stones thrown at them.

— Poor woman, she has such a hard time giving birth to her child. We have been sitting here sixteen hours, and she is still crying. At first she cried out loud. Her screams pierced our ears. Then she cried more quietly, and now she is only moaning.

— The doctor says she'll die.

— No, the doctor says the child will die and she will live.

— Why do they bear children? It is so painful.

— And why do they die? It is still more painful.

[THE OLD WOMEN *laugh suppressedly*]

— Yes, they bear children and die.

— And bear children again.

[*They laugh. A subdued cry of the suffering woman is heard*]

— Beginning again.

— She's recovered her voice. That's good.

— That's good.

— Poor husband. He's lost his head completely. You ought to see him. He's a sight. At first he was glad his wife was pregnant and said he wanted a boy. He thinks his son will be a cabinet minister or a general. Now he doesn't want anything, neither a boy nor a girl. He just goes about grieving and crying.

— Every time she is seized with pain he begins to labor, too, and gets red in the face.

— He was sent to the chemist's shop for medicine, and he hung about there for two hours without being able to remember what he was sent for. He returned without it.

[THE OLD WOMEN *titter. The cries grow louder and die away. Silence*]

— What's the matter with her? Maybe she has died already.

— No. If she had, we'd hear crying, and the doctor would come running and begin to talk nonsense. They'd bring her husband out in a faint, and we'd have to work over him. No, she's not dead.

— Then what are we sitting here for?

— Ask Him. What do we know?

— He won't tell.

— He won't tell. He never tells anything.

— He orders us about as he pleases, gets us out of bed, and makes us watch; and then it turns out that our coming wasn't even needed.

— We came of our own accord, didn't we? We must tell the truth. There, she's screaming again.

— Haven't you had as much of it as you want?

— Are you satisfied?

— I keep my mouth shut and wait.

— You're an angel.

[*They laugh. The cries grow louder*]

— Listen to her. What fearful pain she must be suffering. Have you an idea of what the pain is like? It's as if your insides were being torn to pieces.

— We all have borne children.

— It's just as if she were not herself. I don't recognize our friend's voice. It's naturally so soft and gentle.

— Her screaming is more like the roar of a wild beast.

— You feel the night in it.

— You feel the boundless black forest and hopelessness and terror.

— You feel solitude and grief. There are other people with her. Why can't you hear other voices beside that savage, dismal wail?

— They are talking, but you can't hear them. Have you ever noticed how solitary man's cries are? Any number of men will talk, and you won't hear them. But let one human being cry, and it seems as if the others were all silent, listening.

— I once heard a man scream who had been run over by a carriage and had his leg crushed. The street was full of people. Yet he seemed to be the only one there.

— But this is more terrible.

— Say rather it is louder.

— I should say it is more prolonged.

— No, it's more terrible. You feel death in it.

— You had a feeling of death then, too. In fact, the man did die.

— Don't dispute. It's all the same to you.

[*Silence. Cries*]

— How strange man's crying is! When you yourself are ill and cry, you don't notice how strange it is. I can't imagine the mouth that produces such sounds. Can it be a woman's mouth? I can't imagine it.

— It's as if it got twisted and crooked.

— As if the sound issued from some depth. Now it's like the cry of someone drowning. Listen, she's choking.

— A heavy person is sitting on her chest.

— Someone is choking her.

[*The crying ceases*]

— At last she has quieted down. You get tired of crying. It's monotonous and not beautiful.

— You're looking for beauty here too, are you?

[The Old Women *titter*]

— Hush! Is He here?

— I don't know.

— He seems to be.

— He doesn't like laughing.

— They say He laughs Himself.

— Whoever heard Him laugh? You are simply repeating hearsay. So many lies are told about Him.

— He hears us. Let us be serious.

[*They laugh quietly*]

— After all, I'd like to know whether it'll be a boy or a girl.

— I admit, it's interesting to know whom you'll have to deal with.

— I wish it died before it was born.

— What a kind creature you are.

— No better than you.

— I hope it turns out to be a general.

[*They laugh*]

— You are too merry. I don't like it.

— And you are too sad. I don't like that.

— Don't wrangle. Don't wrangle. We are all both sad and merry. Let each be what she pleases.

[*Silence*]

— When they are born, they are so funny. Babies are very funny.

— And self-satisfied.

— And very exacting. I don't like them. They begin to cry at once and make demands, as if they expected everything to be ready for them. Even before looking, they know there is a breast and milk, and demand them. Then they demand to be put to sleep and rocked and dandled and patted on their red backs. I like them better when they die. Then they're less exacting. They stretch out of themselves and don't ask to be rocked.

— No, they are very funny. I like to wash them when they are born.

— I like to wash them when they are dead.

— Don't dispute. Don't dispute. Each will have her way. One will wash the child when it is born, another when it dies.

— But why do they think they have a right to make demands the moment they are born? I don't like it. They don't *think* they have. It's their stomachs that make the demands.

— They're forever demanding.

— But their demands are never granted.

[THE OLD WOMEN *laugh. The cries begin again*]

— She is screaming again.

— Animals give birth to their offspring more easily.

— And they die more easily, and live more easily. I have a cat. You ought to see how fat and happy she is.

— I have a dog, and I tell him every day: "You are going to die." His only reply is to show his teeth and to wag his tail gayly.

— But they are animals.

— And these are human beings.

[*They laugh*]

— Now she'll either die or be delivered. I feel that the whole remnant of her strength is in that wail.

— Eyes wide open.

— Cold perspiration on her forehead.

[*They listen*]

— She is giving birth to the child.

— No, she is dying.

[*The cries cease*]

— I tell you —

SOMEONE IN GRAY [*speaks in a resonant, powerful voice*]. Silence! Man is born.

[*Almost simultaneously with His announcement the crying of an infant is heard and the candle in His hand lights. A tall candle. It burns hesitatingly and feebly. Gradually the flame grows stronger. The corner in which* SOMEONE IN GRAY *stands motionless is always darker than the other corners, and the yellow flame illumines His blunt chin, His tightly closed lips, and His massive, bony face. The upper part of His face is concealed by His cap. He is somewhat taller than an ordinary man.*

He puts the long, thick candle in an antique candlestick. His hand comes into relief against the green bronze. It is gray, firm, with long, thin fingers.

Gradually the room grows brighter. The figures of five hunch-backed OLD WOMEN *emerge from the gloom, and the room becomes visible. It is rectangular, with high, smooth, monotonously colored walls. Two curtainless windows in the background and two on the right. The night glooms through them. Straight, high-backed chairs against the walls.*]

THE OLD WOMEN [*talking rapidly*]. Hear them running about. They're coming here.

— How bright it is! Let's go.

— Look, the candle is tall and bright.

— Let's go, let's go. Quick!

— But we'll come back. We'll come back.

[*They laugh quietly, mockingly, and disappear into the dusk with odd, zigzagging movements. As they leave, the light grows brighter, but still it remains dim, lifeless, and cold. The corner in which* SOMEONE IN GRAY *stands motionless with the burning candle is darker than the others.*]

[*Enter the* DOCTOR *in a white uniform, and* MAN'S FATHER, *whose face wears an expression of extreme exhaustion and joy. There are lines under his eyes; his cheeks are sunken and his hair is dishevelled; he is very negligently dressed. The* DOCTOR *looks very learned*]

DOCTOR. Up to the very last moment I didn't know whether your wife would pull through or not. I used all the means at the disposal of medical skill and science. But science can do very little unless nature helps too. I was really excited. My pulse is still going hard. Though I have assisted at so many births, yet I can't rid myself of a sense of uneasiness. But you are not listening to me, sir.

MAN'S FATHER. I'm listening, but I can't hear. Her screams are still ringing in my ears, and it's hard for me to pull myself together. Poor woman, how she suffered! I was a fool, I was stupid and wanted to have children. But hereafter I will renounce. It is criminal.

DOCTOR. You will call me again when your next child comes.

FATHER. No, never. I'm ashamed to admit it, but just now I hate the child for which she suffered so. I didn't even see him. What sort of a boy is he?

DOCTOR. He's a well-fed, strong little youngster, and if I'm not mistaken he resembles you.

FATHER. Me? Fine! Now I'm beginning to love him. I always wanted a boy to look like me. Did you see — his nose is like mine, isn't it?

DOCTOR. Yes, his nose and eyes.

FATHER. His eyes too? Ah, that's good. I'll raise your fee.

DOCTOR. You'll have to pay me for using the instruments also.

FATHER [*turning to the corner where He stands motionless*]. God, I thank Thee for having granted my wish and given me a son who resembles me. I thank Thee for preserving my wife from death and bringing my child into the world alive. I pray Thee that he may grow up big, healthy, and strong; that he may be wise and honest, and that he may never cause us grief, but be a constant joy to his mother and me. If Thou wilt do this, I will always believe in Thee and go to church.

[*Enter* RELATIVES, *six in number. An elderly woman, uncommonly stout, with a double chin and small, proud eyes and an air of extreme haughtiness and self-importance. An elderly man, her husband, very tall and uncommonly thin, so that his coat hangs loosely on his body; a short goatee, long, smooth hair, as if wet, reaching to his shoulders; eye-glasses; has a frightened yet pedantic expression; a low black silk hat in his hand. A young girl, their daughter, with naïvely upturned nose, blinking eyes, and open mouth. A weazen woman, with contracted features and a sour expression, in her hand a handkerchief, with which she frequently wipes her mouth. Two young men, looking absolutely alike, with extremely high collars that stretch their necks; glossy hair; a hesitating, embarrassed expression. The characteristics of each of the* RELATIVES *is exaggerated in the extreme.*

ELDERLY LADY. Let me congratulate you on the birth of your son, dear brother. [*Kisses him*]

ELDERLY MAN. My dear brother, I heartily congratulate you on the birth of your son, to which you have been looking forward so long. [*Kisses him*]

THE REST. We congratulate you, dear uncle, on the birth of your son.

[*They kiss him*]

[*Exit the* DOCTOR]

MAN'S FATHER [*greatly moved*]. Thank you! Thank you! You are all very good, very nice, dear people, and I love you very much. I had my doubts before, and thought that you, dear sister, were a little too much rapt up in yourself and your own worth and importance; and that you, dear brother, were somewhat too pedantic. The rest of you I thought were too cold to me, and came here only for the sake of the dinners. Now I see I was mistaken. I'm very happy. I get a son who resembles me, and then all at once I see myself surrounded by so many good people who love me. [*They kiss*]

GIRL. Uncle dear, what are you going to call your son? I hope you'll give him a lovely, poetic name. So much depends on a man's name.

ELDERLY LADY. I should advise a simple, solid name. Men with nice names are usually frivolous and rarely successful.

ELDERLY MAN. It seems to me, brother, you should name your son after some older relative. Keeping the same names in the family tends to preserve and strengthen the line.

FATHER. Yes, my wife and I have already discussed the subject, but have not been able to reach a decision. You see, there are so many new things to think of when a child comes, so many new problems to solve which never arose before.

ELDERLY LADY. It fills up your life.

ELDERLY MAN. It gives life a beautiful purpose. By properly educating a child, preventing it from making the mistakes which we had to pay for so dearly, and strengthening its mind with our own rich experiences, we produce a better man and advance slowly but surely toward the final goal of existence, which is perfection.

FATHER. You are quite right, brother. When I was little I loved to torture animals. That developed cruelty in me. I won't allow my son to torture animals. Even after I had grown up I often made mistakes in my friendships and love. I chose friends who were unworthy and women who were faithless. I'll explain to my son —

DOCTOR [*enters and says aloud*]. Your wife is feeling very bad. She wants to see you.

FATHER. Oh, my God!

[MAN'S FATHER *and the* DOCTOR *leave*]

[*The* RELATIVES *seat themselves in a semicircle. Solemn silence for a time.* SOMEONE IN GRAY *stands motionless in the corner, His stony face turned toward them*]

RELATIVE'S CONVERSATION. Do you think, dear, she may die?

— No, I don't think so. She is a very impatient woman and makes too much of her pains. All women bear children and none of them die. I have borne six children.

— But the way she screamed, mamma?

— Yes, her face was purple from screaming. I noticed it.

— Not from screaming, but from laboring. You don't understand about these things. My face got purple too, but I didn't scream.

— Not long ago an acquaintance of mine, the civil engineer's wife, gave birth to a child, and she scarcely made a sound.

— I know. There's no need for my brother to be so upset. One must be firm and take things calmly. And I'm afraid, too, he'll introduce a lot of his fantastic notions in the bringing up of his children and indulge their every whim.

— He's a very weak character. He has little enough money, and yet he lends it to people who don't deserve to be trusted.

— Do you know how much the child's layette cost?

— Don't talk to me of it! It gets on my nerves, my brother's extravagance does. I often quarrel with him because he's so improvident.

— They say a stork brings babies. What sort of a stork is it?

[*The young men burst out laughing*]

— Don't talk nonsense. I gave birth to five children right in your presence, and I'm no stork, thank the Lord.

[*The young men burst out laughing again. The Elderly Woman eyes them long and sternly*]

— It's only a superstition. Children are born in an absolutely natural way, firmly established by science. They've moved to new quarters now.

— Who?

— The engineer and his wife. Their old place was chilly and damp. They complained to the landlord several times, but he paid no attention.

— I think it's better to live in a small place that's warm than in a large place that's damp. You are liable to catch your death of cold and rheumatism if you live in a damp house.

— I have a friend, too, who lives in a very damp house. And I too. Very damp.

— There are so many damp places nowadays.

— Tell me, please — I've been wanting to ask you a long time — how do you remove a grease stain from light-colored material?

— Woollen?

— No, silk.

[*The child's crying is heard behind the scene*]

— Take a piece of ice and rub it on the spot hard. Then take a hot iron and press the spot.

— No? Fancy, how simple! I heard benzine was better.

— No, benzine is good for dark material. For light goods ice is better.

— I wonder whether smoking is allowed here. Somehow it never occurred to me before whether one may or may not smoke where there is a newborn baby.

— It never occurred to me either. How strange! I know it isn't proper to smoke at funerals, but here —

— Nonsense! Of course you may smoke.

— Smoking is a bad habit just the same. You are still a very young man and ought to take good care of your health. There are many occasions in life when good health is highly essential.

— But smoking stimulates.

— Believe me, it's a very unhealthy stimulant. When I was young and reckless, I was also guilty of using, or rather abusing, tobacco —

— Mamma, listen to him crying. My, how he's crying! Does he want milk, mamma?

[*The young men burst out laughing. The Elderly Woman looks at them sternly.*]

THE SECOND SCENE

LOVE AND POVERTY

The entire place is filled with a warm, bright light. A large, very poor room, high walls, the color of old rose, covered here and there with beautiful, fantastic, roughly drawn designs.

To the right are two lofty windows, eight panes in each, with the darkness of night glooming through them. Two poor beds, two chairs, and a bare table, on which stands a half-broken pitcher of water and a pretty bunch of flowers.

In the darkest corner stands SOMEONE IN GRAY, *the candle in His hand now reduced by a third, but the flame still very bright, high, and white. It throws a powerful light on His face and chin.*

Enter the NEIGHBORS, *dressed in light, gay dresses, their hands full of flowers, grasses, and fresh branches of oak and birch. They run about the room, scattering them. Their faces are merry, simple, and good-natured.*

NEIGHBORS' CONVERSATION. How poor they are! Look, they haven't even a single spare chair.

— And no curtains in the windows.

— And no pictures on the walls.

— How poor they are! All they eat is hard bread.

— And all they drink is water, cold water from the spring.

— They don't own any clothes at all except what they have on. She always goes about in her rosy dress with her neck bare, which makes her look like a young girl.

— And he wears his blouse and loose necktie, which makes him look like an artist, and makes the dogs bark at him.

— And makes all the respectable people disapprove of him.

— Dogs hate the poor. I saw three dogs attack him yesterday. He beat them off with a stick and shouted: "Don't you dare to touch my trousers; they're my last pair!" And he laughed, and the dogs flung themselves at him and showed their teeth and barked viciously.

— I saw two respectable people, a lady and a gentleman, meet him on the street to-day. They were terribly frightened and crossed to the other side. "He'll ask for money," said the gentleman. "He'll kill us," piped the lady. From the other side of the street they looked back at him and held on to their pockets. He shook his head and laughed.

— He's such a jolly good fellow.

— They're always laughing.

— And singing.

— It's he who sings. She dances.

— In her rosy dress, with her little bare neck.

— It does one good to look at them. They are so young and wholesome.

— I am sorry for them. They're starving. Do you understand? They're actually going without food.

— Yes, it's true. They had more clothes and furniture, but they sold every bit, and now they've nothing more to sell.

— I know. She had such pretty earrings, and she sold them to buy bread.

— He had a beautiful black frock-coat, the one in which he was married, and he sold that too.

— The only thing they have left is their engagement rings. How poor they are!

— That's nothing. I was once young myself, and I know what it is.

— What did you say, grandpa?

— I said it's nothing, nothing at all.

— Look, the mere thought of them makes grandpa want to sing.

— And dance.

[*They laugh*]

— He is so kind. He made my boy a bow and arrow.

— She cried with me when my daughter was ill.

— He helped me mend the rickety fence. He's strong.

— It's nice to have such good neighbors. Their youth warms our cold old age. Their jolliness drives away our cares.

— But their room is like a prison, it's so empty.

— No, it's like a temple. It's so bright.

— Look, they have flowers on the table, the flowers she picked on her walk in the country in her rosy dress with her little bare neck. Here are lilies-of-the-valley. The dew hasn't dried on them yet.

— There is the burning campion.

— And violets.

— Don't touch, don't touch the flowers, girls. Her kisses are upon them. Don't throw them on the floor, girls. Her breath is upon them. Don't blow them away with your breath. Don't touch, don't touch the flowers, girls.

— He'll come and he'll see the flowers.

— He'll take the kisses.

— He'll drink her breath.

— How poor they are! How happy they are!

— Come, let's leave.

— Haven't we brought our dear neighbors anything?

— What a shame!

— I brought a bottle of milk and a piece of white, sweet-smelling bread. [*Puts them on the table*]

— I brought flowers. [*Scatters them*]

— We brought branches of oak and birch with green leaves. Let's put them up around the walls. The room will look like cheerful green woods.

[*They decorate the room with the branches, concealing the dark windows and covering the pinkish nakedness of the walls with leaves*]

— I brought a good cigar. It is a cheap one, but it's strong and fragrant and will give pleasant dreams.

— And I brought a ribbon, a red ribbon. It makes a very pretty fancy bow for the hair. It's a present my sweetheart gave me; but I have so many ribbons and she hasn't even one.

— What did *you* bring, grandpa? Did you bring anything?

— Nothing, nothing, except my cough. They don't want that, do they, neighbor?

— No more than they want my crutches. Hey, girls, who wants my crutches?

— Do you remember, neighbor?

— Do *you* remember, neighbor?

— Come, let's go to sleep, neighbor. It's late already.

[*They sigh and leave, one coughing, the other knocking the floor with his crutches*]

— Come, come!

— May God give them happiness. They are such good neighbors.

— God grant that they may always be healthy and merry and always love each other. And may the hideous black cat never pass between them.

— And may the good man find work. It's bad when a man is out of work.

[*They leave*]

[*Enter immediately the* WIFE *of* MAN, *very pretty, graceful, and delicate, wearing flowers in her luxuriant hair which is hanging loose. The expression on her face is very sad. She seats herself on a chair, folds her hands in her lap, and speaks in a sad tone, turned toward the audience*]

MAN'S WIFE. I've just returned from the city, where I went looking for I don't know what. We are so poor, we have nothing, and it's very hard for us to live. We need money, and I don't know how in the world to get it. People won't give it to you for the asking, and I haven't the strength to take it away from them. I was looking for work, but I can't get work either. There are lots of people and little work, they say. I looked on the ground as I walked to see if some rich person hadn't lost his purse, but either nobody had lost one or somebody lucker than I had already picked it up. I feel so sad. My husband will soon come from his search for work, tired and hungry. What am I to give him except my kisses? But you can't satisfy your hunger on kisses. I feel so sad I could cry.

I can go without eating for a long time and not feel it, but he can't. He has a large body which demands food, and when he's gone a long time without it, he gets pale, sick, and excited. He scolds me and then begs me not to be angry at him. I never *am* angry at him, because I love him dearly. It only makes me feel so sad.

My husband is a very talented architect. I even think he's a genius. He was left an orphan when a mere boy, and after his parents' death his relatives supported him for some time; but as he was always of an independent nature, sharp in his talk and prone to make unpleasant remarks, and as he showed them no gratitude, they dropped him. He continued to study, nevertheless, supporting himself by giving lessons, and so made his way through college. He often went hungry, my poor husband. Now he is an architect and draws plans of beautiful buildings, but no one wants to buy them, and many stupid persons make fun of them even. To make one's way in the world one must have either patrons or luck. He has neither. So he goes about looking for a chance, and maybe with his eyes on the ground looking for money like me. He is still very young and simple. Of course, some day fortune will come to us, too. But when will it be? In the meantime it's very hard to live. When we were married we had a little property, but we soon spent it. We went to the theatre and ate candy. He still has hopes, but I sometimes lose all hope and cry to myself. My heart breaks when I think he'll be here soon and I have nothing to give him again except my poor kisses.

O God, be a kind, merciful Father to us. You have so much of everything, bread and work and money. Your earth is so rich. She grows corn and fruit in her fields, covers the meadows with flowers, and yields gold and beautiful precious stones from her bowels. And your sun has so much warmth, and your pensive stars have so much quiet joy. Give us, I pray you, a little from your abundance, just a little, as much as you give your birds. A little bread, so that my dear good husband may not be hungry; a little warmth, so that he may not be cold; and a little work, so that he may carry his beautiful head erect. And please do not be angry with my husband because he swears so and laughs, and even sings and makes me dance. He is so young and not a bit staid or serious.

Now, after I have prayed, I feel relieved and hopeful again. Why, indeed, should God not grant one's request when one asks Him for it so earnestly? I'll go and hunt a little to see if somebody hasn't dropped a purse or a diamond.

[*Exit*]

SOMEONE IN GRAY. She knows not that her wish has already been fulfilled. She knows not that this morning two men in a rich house were bending eagerly over a sketch by Man and were delighted with it. They searched for Man the whole day; wealth was looking for him as he was looking for wealth. And to-morrow morning, after the neighbors have gone to work, an automobile will stop in front of this house, and two men bending low will enter the poor room and bring wealth and fame. But neither he nor she knows it. Thus fortune will come to Man, and thus also it will go.

[*Enter* MAN *and his* WIFE. *He has a beautiful proud head, bright eyes, a high forehead, dark eyebrows parting at the root of the nose like two bold wings, and wavy black hair carelessly tossed back. A low, white, turn-down collar reveals a well-formed neck and part of his chest. He is light and quick in his movements, like a young animal*]

MAN. Nothing again. I'll lie down and remain in bed the whole day. Anyone wanting me will have to come here. I can't go to him. I'll stay in bed the whole of to-morrow too.

WIFE. Are you tired?

MAN. Yes, I'm tired and hungry. I could eat a whole ox, like the Homeric hero, but I shall have to content myself with a piece of hard bread. Don't you know that a man can't live all the time on bread alone? I want to tear, bite, chew!

WIFE. I'm sorry for you, dear.

MAN. I'm sorry for myself, but that doesn't satisfy my hunger. I stood a whole hour in front of a restaurant today, looking at the chickens, pastry, and sausages, as people look at works of art. And then the signs. They describe ham so well that you could eat sign and all.

WIFE. I like ham too.

MAN. Who doesn't like ham? How about lobster? Do you like lobster?

WIFE. Yes.

MAN. You should have seen the lobster I saw. It was a painted one, but it was even more beautiful than a live one. Red like a cardinal, majestic, stern. You could kneel down and do homage to it. I think I could eat two such cardinals and a priest of a carp besides.

WIFE [*sadly*]. You didn't see my flowers, did you?

MAN. Flowers? You can't eat flowers, can you?

WIFE. You don't love me.

MAN [*kisses her*]. Excuse me, but really I'm so hungry. Look, my hands are trembling and I haven't even the strength to throw a stone at a dog.

WIFE [*kisses his hand*]. My poor husband!

MAN. Where do those leaves on the floor come from? They smell so good. Is that your work too?

WIFE. No, the neighbors must have done it.

MAN. Fine people our neighbors are. It's strange, there are so many good people in the world, and yet a man can die of hunger. Why is it?

WIFE. You've turned so sad. Your face is growing pale. What is the matter? Do you see anything?

MAN. Yes, as I was joking, the terrible image of poverty glided in front of me and stopped there, in the corner. Do you see it? Arms stretched out in complaint, a child abandoned in the woods, a praying voice, and the stillness of a human desert. Help! No one hears. Help, I'm dying! No one hears. Look, wife, look! See the

dark, gloomy shadows there, quivering and rising like black smoke from a long, terrible chimney leading into hell. Look! And I'm in the midst of them!

WIFE. I'm afraid. I can't look in that dark corner. Did you see all that in the street?

MAN. Yes, I saw it in the street, and soon it'll be that way with us.

WIFE. No, God will not permit it.

MAN. Then why does He permit it to happen to others?

WIFE. We're better than others. We are good people. We never offend Him.

MAN. You think so? I do a lot of swearing.

WIFE. You're not bad.

MAN. Yes, I am bad. When I walk along the street and see all the things that don't belong to us, I feel as if I had tusks like a boar. Oh, how much money I haven't got! Listen, my dear wife. I was walking in the park to-day, that lovely park, where the paths are straight as arrows and the beech-trees like kings wearing crowns —

WIFE. And I was walking in the city streets. Shops everywhere, such beautiful shops!

MAN. I saw men, beautifully dressed, carrying canes, and I thought: "I haven't anything like that."

WIFE. I saw elegantly dressed women, wearing dainty shoes that make your feet beautiful, and pretty hats from under which your eyes shine impenetrably, and silk skirts that make such a mysterious rustle; and I thought: "I haven't a good hat or a silk skirt."

MAN. A ruffian jostled me. I showed him my tusks, and he fled in disgrace to hide himself in the crowd.

WIFE. A well-dressed lady jostled me, but I didn't even look at her, I felt so embarrassed.

MAN. Men rode by on proud, fiery horses. And I have nothing like that.

WIFE. She had diamonds in her ears. You felt like kissing them.

MAN. Red and green automobiles glided past noiselessly like phantoms with burning eyes, and people sat in them and laughed and looked lazily from one side to the other. And I have nothing like it.

WIFE. And I have no diamonds, no emeralds, no pure white pearls.

MAN. I saw a fine restaurant on the Island. It was brightly illuminated, like heaven, and they were eating there. Black-coated monsters carried around butter and bread and wine and beer, and people ate and drank. My little wife, I'm hungry! I want something to eat!

WIFE. Dearie, you're running around all the time, and that makes you still hungrier. You'd better sit down. I'll kneel beside you, and you can take a piece of paper and draw a beautiful, beautiful building.

MAN. My inspiration is also hungry. It draws nothing but edible landscapes. My palaces are like portly cakes with fat stuffing, and my churches like sausages. But I see tears in your eyes. What is it, my dear wife?

WIFE. I feel so miserable not to be able to help you.

MAN. You make me ashamed of myself. I am a strong man with a good mind; I am able, talented, and healthy, and yet I can't do a thing. My dear wife, my little fairy is crying, and I am not able to help her. A woman's tears are her husband's disgrace. I am ashamed.

WIFE. But it isn't your fault that people don't appreciate you.

MAN. My ears are burning just as they used to when I was a boy and had had them boxed. Why, you are hungry too, and I, egoist that I am, haven't noticed it. It's mean of me.

WIFE. My dear, I don't feel hungry.

MAN. It's unfair, it's contemptible. That ruffian who jostled me was right. He saw I was a fat pig and that's all, a boar with sharp tusks but a stupid head.

WIFE. If you are going to keep on reproaching yourself, I'll cry again.

MAN. Don't, don't. No tears! Tears in your eyes frighten me. I am afraid of those shining crystal drops, as if some other, some terrible person were shedding them, not you. I won't let you cry. We have nothing, we are poor. But I'll tell you of what we are going to have. I will charm you with a bright fairy tale, my queen. I will array you in dazzling dreams as in roses!

WIFE. You mustn't be afraid. You are strong, you are a genius, you will conquer. Your momentary despair will pass away, and divine inspiration will again quicken your proud head.

MAN [*assumes a challenging attitude and throws an oak leaf into the corner where the* UNKNOWN *stands, saying*]. Ho, you, whatever your name, Fate, Devil, or Life, I fling my glove down

before you, I challenge you to combat! The poor in spirit bow before your enigmatic power. Your stony face inspires them with fear; in your silence they hear the approaching tread of misery and terrible ruin. But I am strong and bold, and I challenge you to combat! Come on! Let the swords glitter, the shields clang! Deal and receive blows so that the earth trembles! Ho, come forth to battle!

WIFE [*nestling up at his left, somewhat behind, speaking solemnly*]. Bolder, my husband, still bolder!

MAN. To your evil-boding inaction I oppose my living, daring strength; to your gloom my clear, resonant laugh! Ho, repel the blows! You have a stone brow, devoid of reason. I will throw the glowing balls of my sparkling thought at it. You have a stone heart, devoid of pity. Take care, I will pour into it the poison of my rebellious outcries. The dark cloud of your grim wrath overshadows the sun. We will light the darkness with our swords. Ho, repel the blows!

WIFE. Bolder, still bolder, my proud knight! Your squire is behind you.

MAN. Victorious, I will sing songs which the whole world will reëcho; fallen under your blows, my only thought shall be to rise again and rush into battle. There are weak spots in my armor, but when my red blood is flowing, I will gather my last strength and cry: "You have not conquered, evil Enemy of Man!"

WIFE. Bolder, my knight! I will wash your wounds with my tears. I will stop the flow of your red blood with my kisses.

MAN. And dying on the field of battle as the brave die, with one cry I will destroy your blind joy: "I have conquered!" I have conquered, O cruel Enemy. Unto my last breath I did not recognize your power!

WIFE. Bolder, my knight, bolder! I will die beside you.

MAN. Ho, come forth to battle! Let the swords glitter, the shields clang! Deal and receive blows to make the earth tremble! Ho, come forth!

[*For some time* MAN *and his* WIFE *remain in the same posture; then they turn around, facing each other, and kiss*]

MAN. That's the way we'll deal with life, my dear, won't we? Let it frown like a blind owl in the sun — we'll compel it to smile.

WIFE. And to dance to our songs — so we will, we two.

MAN. We two. You're a good wife, you're my true friend, you're a brave little woman, and as long as you are with me I fear nothing. Poverty, what does it amount to? To-day we're poor, to-morrow rich.

WIFE. And what is hunger? To-day we are hungry, to-morrow satisfied.

MAN. Do you think so? It's quite possible. But I'll eat a lot. I shall need so much to satisfy my hunger. Tell me, do you think this will prove enough? In the morning, tea or coffee or chocolate. You can have your choice. It's free. Then a breakfast of three courses, then lunch, then dinner, then —

WIFE. More fruit. I like fruit.

MAN. Very well. I'll buy fruit by the barrel, direct from the wholesale market. It's cheaper and fresher. Besides, we'll have our own garden.

WIFE. But we have no land.

MAN. I'll buy land. I've always wanted to have my own piece of land. By the way, I'll build a house for us and design it too. Let the rascals see what sort of an architect I am.

WIFE. I should like to live in Italy, close by the sea; in a white marble villa in a grove of lemons and cypresses, with marble steps leading straight down to the blue water.

MAN. I understand. That's all right. But I intend, besides, to build a castle in the mountains of Norway. Below, the fjord; and above, on the steep mountain, the castle. We have no paper. But look, I'll show it to you on the wall here. Here is the fjord, you see?

WIFE. Yes, beautiful.

MAN. Here, sparkling blue water gently beating against the green grass; here, beautiful cinnamon-colored stone; and there, in the recess, where this spot is, a bit of blue sky and serene white clouds.

WIFE. Look, there is a white boat floating on the water — it looks like two swans swimming side by side.

MAN. And up there rises the mountain. Bright and green below, it turns gloomier and sterner as it ascends — rugged crags, dark shadows, fallen boulders, and patches of clouds.

WIFE. Like a ruined castle.

MAN. And there, on that spot —

the middle one — I'll build my royal castle.

WIFE. It's cold up there, and windy.

MAN. I'll have thick stone walls and large windows with all the panes made out of a single piece of glass. At night, when the winter snowstorms begin to rage and the fjord below to roar, we'll draw the curtains and make a fire in the huge fireplace. It is such a tremendous fireplace that it will hold a whole log. It will burn up a whole forest of pines.

WIFE. How nice and warm!

MAN. And how quiet too, if you will please notice. Carpets covering the whole floor and lots of books will make it cosy and quietly lively. And we'll be there, the two of us. The wind howling outside and we two sitting before the fireplace on a white bearskin rug. "Wouldn't you like to have a look at what's doing outside?" you'll say. "All right!" And we'll go to the largest window and draw aside the curtain. Good heavens! What a sight!

WIFE. See the snow whirling.

MAN. Galloping like white horses, like myriads of frightened little spirits, pale with fear and seeking safety in the night. And what a howling and roaring!

WIFE. Oh, it's cold. I'm shivering.

MAN. Go back to the fireplace, quick! Hey there, fetch me grandfather's goblet — not that one, the golden one from which the vikings drank. Fill it up with sparkling wine — not that way — fill it to the brim with the burning draught. Venison is roasting on the spit. Bring it here. I'll eat some. Quick, or I'll eat you. I'm hungry as the devil.

WIFE. There, they have brought it. Now, go on.

MAN. Go on? I'll eat some, of course. What else do you expect? What are you doing to my head, little wife?

WIFE. I am the goddess of fame. I have woven a crown of the oak leaves that our neighbors scattered here, and I'm crowning you. It's Fame that has come to you, the beautiful goddess Fame. [*Puts the wreath on his head*]

MAN. Yes, fame; loud, noisy fame. Look at the wall. Do you see this? It's I, walking. And who is this next to me? Do you see?

WIFE. I.

MAN. Look, they are bowing to us; they are whispering about us; they are pointing their fingers at us. There is a venerable old gentleman saying with tears in his eyes: "Happy the land that has such children!" See how pale this youth here has turned. Fame looked at him and gave him a smile. That's after I built the People's House, which is the pride of the whole country.

WIFE. You are my famous husband. The oak wreath suits you so well. A laurel wreath would become you still better.

MAN. Look, look, there come the representatives of the city where I was born. They bow to me and say: "Our city is proud of the honor — "

WIFE. Oh!

MAN. What is it?

WIFE. I found a bottle of milk.

MAN. Impossible!

WIFE. And bread, soft, sweet-smelling bread. And a cigar.

MAN. Impossible! You are mistaken. It's the dampness from that damned wall, that's what it is. It isn't milk.

WIFE. But it is.

MAN. A cigar? Cigars don't grow on windows. They are sold for fortunes in tobacco stores. It's a black stick, a piece of a branch, I'm sure.

WIFE. Look and see. I suppose our neighbors brought it.

MAN. Our neighbors? I tell you they're people — they're not human — they're divine. But even if the devil himself brought it — quick, give it here, my sweet little wife.

[MAN'S WIFE *seats herself on his knees, and so they eat. She breaks off pieces of bread and puts them in his mouth. He feeds her the milk from the bottle*]

MAN. Seems to be cream.

WIFE. No, it's milk. Chew better. You'll choke.

MAN. Give me the crust. It's so brown.

WIFE. I told you, you'd choke.

MAN. No, it went down. I swallowed it.

WIFE. The milk is running down my chin and neck. Oh, it's tickling me.

MAN. Lean over. I'll lick it off. We mustn't let a drop go to waste.

WIFE. You're a cunning one.

MAN. There! Quick work. All good things soon come to an end. This bottle seems to have a double bottom. It looks so large. The glass manufacturers are terrible cheats.

[*He lights the cigar with the air of a man relaxing into beatific repose. His* WIFE *ties the red ribbon in her hair, looking at herself in the dark pane of the window*]

WIFE. Don't you see?

MAN. I see everything. I see your ribbon, and I see you want me to kiss you on your dear little bare neck.

WIFE. No, sir, I won't permit that. You've grown too forward of late anyway. You take such liberties. Please go on smoking your cigar and leave my neck —

MAN. What, isn't your neck mine? I'll be jiggered! Why, it's an attack on the sacred rights of property! [*She runs away; he catches her and kisses her*] So, the property rights have been restored. Now, my dear, we'll dance. Imagine that this is a magnificent, a luxurious, a wonderful, a supernatural, an exquisitely beautiful palace.

WIFE. Very well, I'm imagining it.

MAN. Imagine you're the queen of the ball.

WIFE. All right. It is imagined.

MAN. And that counts, marquises, and dukes come up and ask you to dance. But you refuse. You choose that one — What's his name? — the one in uniform — the prince. What's the matter?

WIFE. I don't like princes.

MAN. Indeed? Then whom *do* you like?

WIFE. Talented artists.

MAN. Very well. Here's one for you. Why, girl, what are you doing? Are you flirting with the air?

WIFE. I am imagining.

MAN. All right. Imagine a wonderful orchestra. Here is the Turkish drum — boom, boom, boom! [*He strikes his fist on the table as on a drum*]

WIFE. Why, dear, it's only in the circus that they attract crowds by beating drums, but in a palace —

MAN. Oh, hang it! Stop imagining that, then. Now imagine something else. The violins are playing a melodious plaint; the flutes are singing gently; the double bass drones like a beetle.

[MAN *sits down, still wearing his oak wreath, and strikes up a dance tune, clapping his hands in accompaniment. The melody is the same as in the next scene at* MAN'S *ball. The* WIFE *dances. She is well-formed and graceful*]

MAN. Oh, you darling!

WIFE. I am the queen of the ball.

[*The song and dance grow ever jollier.* MAN *rises slowly and begins to dance lightly on the spot where he is standing; then he seizes his* WIFE *and dances with her. The oak wreath slips to one side.*

SOMEONE IN GRAY *looks on indifferently, the candle burning brightly in his petrified hand*]

THE THIRD SCENE

A BALL AT MAN'S HOUSE

The ball is in the drawing-room of MAN'S *large mansion. It is a very lofty, spacious, perfectly rectangular room. The floor is bright and smooth. There is a certain irregularity about the room due to the disproportionate size of the parts. Thus, the doors are very small in proportion to the windows. This produces a strange, irritating impression, as of something disharmonious, something lacking, and also of something superfluous and adventitious. The whole is pervaded by a chilly white, the monotony of which is broken only by a row of windows in the rear wall. They are very high, reaching almost to the ceiling, and dense with the blackness of night. Not one gleam, not a bright spot shows in the blank spaces between the window frames.* MAN'S *wealth shows in the abundance of gildings. There are gilded chairs, and very wide gold frames enclose the pictures. These constitute the only furniture as well as the only ornamentation. The lighting is from three chandeliers shaped like rings, with a few electric lights placed at a great distance apart. At the ceiling the light is bright, but considerably less so below, so that the walls seem grayish.*

The ball is in full swing. The music is furnished by an orchestra of three pieces. The musicians resemble closely their respective instruments; the violinist, a violin — lean neck, small head, a shock of hair brushed to one side, back somewhat bent, a handkerchief correctly adjusted on his shoulder under the violin; the flute-player, a flute — very tall, with a thin, elongated face, and stiff, thin legs; the bass-violinist, a double-bass —

stumpy, round-shouldered, lower part of his body very stout, wide trousers. The uncommon effort with which the musicians play is painfully evident. They beat time, swing their heads, and shake their bodies. The tune is the same throughout the ball, a short polka in two musical phrases, producing a jolly, hopping, extremely insipid effect. The three instruments do not quite keep time with one another, producing a sort of queer detachment, a vacant space, as it were, between them and the sounds which they produce.

Young men and girls are dancing dreamily. All are handsome, distinguished-looking, with good figures. In contrast to the piercing notes of the music, their dancing is smooth, noiseless, light. At the first musical phrase, they circle around; at the second, they gracefully part and join again. There is a slight mannerism in their dancing.

Along the walls, on the gilded chairs, sit the Guests, *stiff and constrained. They scarcely venture to move their heads. Their conversation is also constrained. They do not whisper to one another; they do not laugh, and they scarcely look at one another. They speak abruptly, as if chopping out the words of a text. Their hands hanging superciliously over their laps make their arms look as if they had been broken at the wrists. The monotony of their faces is strongly emphasized. Every face bears the same expression of self-satisfaction, haughtiness, and inane respect for the wealth of* Man.

The dancing girls are all in white, the men in black. Some of the Guests *wear black, white, and brightly yellow flowers.*

In the near corner, which is darker than the rest, Someone in Gray *called* He *stands motionless. The candle in his hand is reduced two-thirds, and burns with a strong, yellow light, casting a yellow sheen on His stony face and chin*]

The Guests' Conversation. It is a very great honor to be a guest at Man's ball.

— You may add, it is an honor of which very few have been deemed worthy. The whole city tried to get themselves invited, but only a very few succeeded. My husband, my children, and I are quite proud of the honor Man has showed us.

— I am really sorry for those who were not able to get here. They won't sleep the whole night from sheer envy, and to-morrow they'll say nasty things about the ball and call it a bore.

— They never saw such magnificence.

— Or such wonderful wealth and luxury.

— Or, I dare say, such charming, free and easy gayety.

— If this isn't gay, I should like to know what is.

— Oh, what's the use of talking? You can't convince people consumed by jealousy. They'll tell us we didn't sit on gilded chairs, absolutely not.

— They'll say that the chairs were of the commonest sort, bought at second hand.

— That the illumination was not by electricity, but just by tallow candles.

— Say candle stumps.

— Or dirty lamps.

— They'll have the impudence to maintain that the mouldings in Man's house are not gilded.

— And that the broad picture frames are not made of gold. It seems to me I can hear the very ring of it.

— You can see its glitter. That's quite sufficient, I should think.

— I have rarely had the pleasure of hearing such music.

— It is divine harmony. It transports the soul to higher spheres.

— I should think the music good enough, considering the money paid for it. It is the best trio in the city. They play on the most important and solemn occasions.

— If you listen awhile, it compels your absolute attention. After a ball at Man's, my children keep singing the tune a long time.

— I sometimes think I hear it in the street. I look around — no musicians, no music.

— What I like especially in these musicians is the great effort they make when they play. They know the price they're paid and don't want to get the money for nothing. That's very decent of them.

— It seems as if they became a part of their instruments, their efforts are so great.

— Or as if the instruments became part of them.

— How rich!

— How magnificent!
— How brilliant!
— How rich!

[*For some time the two expressions, "How rich! How magnificent!" are repeated from different parts of the room, uttered abruptly, like a bark*]

— Beside this ballroom there are fourteen other magnificent rooms in Man's house. I have seen them all. The dining-room has such a huge fireplace that you can put a whole log into it. There are magnificent guest-rooms and a beautiful boudoir. A large bedroom, and over the pillows on the beds — just fancy! — canopies!

— Why, how wonderful! Canopies!

— Did you hear? Canopies!

— Permit me to continue. For their son, the little boy, they have a beautiful bright room of golden-yellow wood. It looks as if the sun were shining into it all the time.

— He is such a fine boy. He has curly hair that looks like the rays of the sun.

— That's true. When you look at him you wonder whether the sun has risen.

— And when you look at his eyes you think: "Autumn is gone, and the blue sky is here again."

— Man loves his son madly. He bought him a pony for horseback riding, a nice snow-white pony. My children—

— Pray, let me continue. Have I told you yet about the swimming-pool?

— No. No.

— A swimming-pool, a perfect marvel.

— What, a swimming-pool!

— Yes. And further on is Man's study, full of books, books, books. They say he's a very learned man.

— You can see it by the books.

— I have seen his garden.

— I haven't.

— It was entrancing, I must say. Imagine an emerald-green lawn kept beautifully mowed and trimmed at the edges. In the middle a path of fine red sand.

— Flowers — even palms.

— Yes, even palms. And all the trees trimmed as carefully and precisely as the lawn, some cut in the shape of pyramids, others in the shape of green columns. There's a lovely fountain and little plaster elves and deer scattered all around in the grass.

— How rich!

— How magnificent!
— How brilliant!
— How rich!

— Man did me the honor of showing me his stables and barns. I had to tell him how much I admired his horses and carriages. I was particularly impressed by his motor car.

— Think of it, he has seven servants; seven — a chef, a woman-cook, two maids, gardeners —

— You forget the coachman and the chauffeur.

— Yes, of course, the coachman and the chauffeur.

— And they themselves do nothing at all. They are too fine.

— You must admit, it is a great honor to have been invited to Man's ball.

— Don't you find the music somewhat monotonous?

— No, I don't, and I'm surprised you do. Don't you see what kind of musicians they are?

— I should like to hear such music all my life. That's what I say. There's something in that music that stirs me.

— Me too.

— Me too.

— It is a delicious sensation to abandon oneself to dreams of happiness under the influence of this music!

— To transport oneself in fancy to the astral spheres!

— How fine!
— How rich!
— How magnificent!

[*These phrases are repeated*]

— I notice a stir at that door. Man and his Wife will soon pass through the hall.

— The musicians are working away for dear life.

— There they are!

— They're coming! Look, they're coming!

[MAN, *his* WIFE, *his* FRIENDS, *and his* ENEMIES *appear in the door on the right, cross the room diagonally to the door on the left. The dancers go on dancing, but part to make way for them. The musicians play desperately loud and out of tune.*

MAN *has aged greatly. His long hair and long beard are beginning to turn gray. But his face is manly and handsome, and he walks with calm dignity and an air of coldness. He looks straight ahead of him, as if not noticing those around him. His* WIFE *has also aged, but she is still beautiful and*

walks leaning on his arm. She too seems not to notice the people around her, but looks straight ahead, with a rather strange, almost fixed expression. Both are richly dressed.

His FRIENDS *follow directly behind* MAN. *They resemble one another very much — noble faces, high and candid foreheads, honest eyes. They walk proudly, throwing out their chests, stepping firmly and confidently, and looking, now to this side, now to that, with condescension and slight disdain. They wear white roses in their buttonholes.*

Following them at a slight distance come MAN'S ENEMIES, *also very much resembling one another — mean, cunning faces; low, heavy foreheads; long, ape-like arms. They walk uneasily, pushing, bending, and hiding behind one another, and casting sharp, mean, envious, sidelong glances from beneath lowered lids. Yellow roses appear in their buttonholes.*

Thus they pass through the room, slowly and in perfect silence. The sounds of the steps, the music, and the exclamations of the GUESTS *produce a sharply discordant noise*]

GUESTS' CONVERSATION.

— There they are. There they are. What an honor!

— How handsome he is!

— What a manly face!

— Look! Look!

— He isn't looking at us!

— He doesn't see us!

— We are his guests!

— What an honor! What an honor!

— And his wife! Look! Look!

— How beautiful she is!

— How proud!

— I tell you, just look at her diamonds!

— Her pearls! Her pearls!

— And her rubies!

— How rich! What an honor!

— Honor! Honor! Honor!

[*The same phrases are repeated again*]

— Here are Man's Friends!

— Look, look, there are Man's Friends.

— Noble faces!

— Proud gait!

— They shine with the reflected splendor of his fame.

— How they love him!

— How faithful they are to him!

— What an honor to be one of Man's Friends!

— They regard everything here as their own!

— They're at home here!

— What an honor!

— Honor! Honor! Honor!

[*Same phrases are repeated*]

— And there are Man's Enemies!

— Look, look, Man's Enemies!

— They walk like whipped curs!

— Man has subdued them!

— He's put a muzzle on them!

— They're wagging their tails!

— They're sneaking behind one another.

— They're pushing one another.

— Ha-ha! Ha-ha!

[*Everybody laughs*]

— What mean faces!

— What greedy looks!

— Cowardly!

— Malevolent!

— They're afraid to look at us!

— They feel we're at home!

— Let's frighten them.

— Man'll be thankful to us for it.

— Ho-ho!

[*They shout at* MAN'S ENEMIES, *mingling their shouts with laughter. The* ENEMIES *huddle closer together and cast sharp, timid, sideward glances*]

— They're going! They're going!

— What an honor!

— They're going!

— Ho-ho! Ha-ha!

— They're gone! They're gone! They're gone!

[*The procession disappears through the door on the left. A pause of silence. The music plays less loudly, and the dancers begin gradually to fill the hall*]

— Where did they go?

— I believe they went to the dining-room, where supper is being served.

— I suppose they'll soon invite us in. Do you see anybody looking for us?

— Yes, it's time for supper. If you eat too late, you can't sleep well.

— I always serve supper early.

— A late supper lies heavy on your stomach.

— And the music is still playing.

— And they're still dancing.

— I wonder they don't get tired.

— How rich!

— How magnificent!

— Do you know for how many guests they have prepared the supper?

— I didn't get a chance to count all the covers. The caterer came in, and I had to get out.

— Could they possibly have forgotten us?

— Man is so proud, and we are so unimportant.

— Don't say that. My husband says we do him an honor by accepting his invitation. We are rich, too.

— When you consider the reputation of his wife —

— Do you see anyone looking for us? Maybe he's looking for us in the other rooms.

— How rich!

— If you are not careful with other people's money, it's easy to get rich, I think.

— Oh, now, it's only his enemies who say that.

— Well, after all, there are some very respectable people among them. I must admit that my husband —

— It is late, though.

— It's clear there must be a mistake somewhere. I can't believe we've simply been forgotten.

— Evidently you know people and life very little if you think so.

— I am surprised. We are rich enough ourselves.

— It seems to me someone called us.

— You're mistaken, no one called us. I don't understand it. To be quite frank — why did we come to a house like this, with such a reputation? One should be very careful of the friends one chooses.

A Liveried Lackey [*appears at the door*]. Man and his Wife beg the honored guests to step into the dining-room.

Guests [*rising quickly*]. What a livery!

— He asked us to come in!

— I said there must be a mistake somewhere.

— Man is so good. I'm sure he hasn't had a chance to sit down at table himself.

— Didn't I say someone was looking for us?

— What a livery!

— They say the supper is grand.

— Everything at Man's is done in a grand style.

— What music! What an honor to be at Man's ball!

— Let those envy us who —

— How grand!

— How magnificent!

— What an honor!

[*They go out one after the other, repeating the last phrases. One couple after the other stop dancing and follow the* Guests *in silence. For some time a single couple remain circling on the floor, but they too join the others at last. The musicians, however, continue to play, making the same desperate effort. The lackey turns out the electric lights, leaving only one light in the farthest chandelier. The figures of the musicians are vaguely seen in the dim light, swaying to and fro with their instruments. The outline of* Someone in Gray *is sharply visible. The flame of the candle flickers, illuminating His stony face and chin with a garish, yellow light.*

He turns around without raising his head, walks slowly and calmly through the whole length of the room, and disappears through the door through which Man *passed out*]

THE FOURTH SCENE

MAN'S MISFORTUNE

A large, gloomy, quadrangular room, with dark walls, dark floor, and dark ceiling. There are two high, curtainless windows with eight panes in the rear wall, and between them a small, low door. Two similar windows appear in the right wall. Night glooms through the windows, and, when the door opens, the same deep blackness of night stares into the room. In general, however bright Man's *rooms may be, the vast darkness of the windows engulfs the light.*

On the left wall there is nothing but a small, low door leading to the rest of the house. At the window on the right stands a broad sofa covered with dark oilcloth. Man's *desk is very simple and poor. On it are seen a dimly burning, shaded lamp, a sheet of yellow paper with a sketch drawn on it, and a lot of toys — a little peaked cap, a wooden horse without a tail, and a red, long-nosed clown with bells. Between the windows there is an old dilapidated bookcase entirely empty. The visible lines of dust left by the books show that they must have*

been removed recently. The room has only one chair.

In the darkest corner stands SOMEONE IN GRAY *called He. The candle in his hand is now no longer than it is thick. The wax is running over a little. The stump burns with a reddish, flickering light, and casts a red sheen on His stony face and chin.*

The only remaining servant of MAN, *an* OLD WOMAN, *is sitting on the chair. She speaks in an even voice, addressing an imaginary companion.*

OLD WOMAN. There! Man has slipped back into poverty. He had a lot of valuable things, horses and carriages, and even an automobile. Now he has nothing. Of all his servants I am the only one left. There are still some good things in here and in two other rooms. There's the sofa and the bookcase. But in the other twelve rooms there's not a thing. They are dark and empty. Rats run around in them day and night and fight and squeak. People are afraid, but I'm not. It's all the same to me.

An iron sign has been hanging on the gate for ever so long, saying the house is for sale. But no one wants to buy it. The sign's rusty already, and the rain has worn the letters away. But no one comes to buy the house. No one wants an old house. Yet maybe someone will buy it. Then we'll be going to look for another place to live in. It'll be a strange place. My mistress will begin to cry, and, I dare say, the old gentleman will too. But I won't. It's all the same to me.

You wonder what's become of all his riches. I don't know. Maybe it seems strange, but I've been living with other people all my life, and many is the time I've seen money disappear, quietly running off through some leak or other. That's the way it has happened to these folks too. They had a lot, then it got to be a little, and then nothing at all. People came and bought things. Then they stopped coming. I once asked my mistress how it came about. She answered: "People have stopped liking what they used to like; they have stopped loving what they used to love." "How is that possible?" says I. "How can people stop liking what they once liked?" She didn't answer and fell to crying. But I didn't. It's all the same to me. It's all the same to me.

People say they are surprised at me. It's terrible, they say, to live in this house; terrible to sit here at night with only the wind whining in the chimney and the rats squeaking and scuffling. Maybe it is terrible, I don't know; but I don't think about it. Why should I? There they sit, the two of them, in their room, looking at each other and listening to the whining of the wind; and I sit in the kitchen alone and listen to the whining of the wind. Doesn't the same wind whine in our ears? Young folks used to come to see their son, and they would all laugh and sing and go through the empty rooms to chase the rats. But nobody comes to me, and I sit alone, all alone. There's no one to talk to, so I talk to myself, and it's all the same to me.

I'm sure they had a hard enough time of it — no need of more ill luck. But three days ago another misfortune happened to them. The young gentleman went out walking, his hat cocked, his hair dressed in latest fashion. And a bad man went and threw a stone at him from behind a corner and broke his head like a nut. They brought him home, put him to bed, and now he's dying in there. Maybe he'll recover and live — who knows? The old lady and the old gentleman cried, and then they put all the books on a wagon and sold them. With the money they hired a nurse, bought medicines, and even grapes. So the books, too, were of some good. But he doesn't eat the grapes. He doesn't even look at them. They just lie there on the dish, just lie there.

DOCTOR [*enters through the outer door; his face looks red and his manner is uneasy*]. Can you tell me if I am in the right place? I'm a doctor. I have many visits to pay, and I often make mistakes. I'm called here and there and everywhere, and all the houses look alike and the people in them are all sad. Have I struck the right place?

OLD WOMAN. I don't know.

DOCTOR. I'll consult my note-book. Is there a child here choking with a sore throat?

OLD WOMAN. No.

DOCTOR. Is there a man here who suddenly went insane from poverty and attacked his wife and two children with a hatchet? Four patients in all, I suppose.

OLD WOMAN. No.

DOCTOR. Is there a girl here whose heart stopped beating? Don't lie, old woman, I think she is here.

OLD WOMAN. No.

DOCTOR. Well, I believe you. You seem to speak the truth. Is there a young man here whose head was broken by a stone and who is dying?

OLD WOMAN. Yes. Go through that door on the left, but don't go any farther. The rats will eat you up!

DOCTOR. Very well. They keep ringing, ringing all the time, day and night. Here it is, late at night. All the lights in the street are out, and I am still on the run. Often I make a mistake and enter the wrong house. Yes, old woman, I do.

[*Exit through the door leading inside*]

OLD WOMAN. One doctor has already treated him, but didn't cure him. Now there's another, and I guess he won't cure him either. Well! Then their son will die, and we'll remain alone in the house. I'll sit in the kitchen and talk to myself, and they'll sit in there keeping quiet and thinking. Another room vacated, another room for the rats to scuffle in. Let them squeak and scuffle. It's all the same to me. It's all the same to me. You ask me why that bad fellow threw the stone at our young gentleman. I don't know — how could I know why people want to kill each other? One threw a stone from behind a corner and ran away; the other one fell in a heap and is now dying — that's all I know. They say that our young gentleman was a fine chap, very brave, and very kind to poor people. I don't know anything about it — it is all the same to me. Whether they are good or bad, young or old, quick or dead, it is all the same to me. It is all the same to me.

As long as they pay, I'll stay with them; and when they stop paying, I'll go to other people to do their housework, and finally I shall stop altogether — when I get old, and my eyesight gets poor, so that I can't tell salt from sugar. Then they'll turn me out and say: "Go where you please. We'll hire another one." What of it? I'll go. It's all the same to me. Here, there, or nowhere, it's all the same to me. It's all the same to me.

[*Enter* DOCTOR, MAN *and his* WIFE. *Both have aged greatly and are completely gray.* MAN'S *long bristling hair and beard give his face a leonine appearance. He walks slightly stooping, but holds his head erect and looks sternly and resolutely from beneath his gray eyebrows. When he looks at anything closely, he puts on large, silver-framed eye-glasses*]

DOCTOR. Your son has fallen into a deep sleep. Don't wake him. It may bring on a turn for the better. You go to sleep too. When one has a chance to sleep one should grab it and not stay up talking.

WIFE. Thank you, doctor, it's been such a relief. Will you call to-morrow again?

DOCTOR. Yes, to-morrow and the day after to-morrow. Old woman, you go to bed too. It's late, it's time for all to go to bed. Is that the door to leave by? I often make mistakes.

[*He goes out. The* OLD WOMAN *goes also.* MAN *and his* WIFE *are left alone*]

MAN. Look, wife, I began to draw this while our son was still well. I stopped at this line and thought I'd rest and resume the work later. See what a simple, placid line it is, yet horrible to look at. It may be the last line I shall have drawn in our boy's lifetime. What malicious ignorance there is graven in its simplicity and placidity.

WIFE. Don't get excited, my dear. Don't think those evil thoughts. I believe the doctor told the truth and our son will recover.

MAN. Aren't you excited too? Look at yourself in the mirror. You're as white as your hair, my old friend.

WIFE. Of course, I am a little excited, but I'm convinced there's no danger.

MAN. Now, as always, you encourage me and fool me so sincerely, so guilelessly. My poor squire, true guardian of my dulled sword, your knight is a poor, broken-down man. He cannot hold a weapon in his feeble hand. What do I see? Our son's toys. Who put them there?

WIFE. My dear, you put them there yourself long ago. Have you forgotten? You said you found it easier to work with the child's innocent toys beside you.

MAN. Yes, I had forgotten. But now it's terrible to look at them, as terrible as it is for a convict to look at

instruments of torture. If the child dies, his toys will remain as a curse to the living. Wife, wife, the sight of them is terrible to me!

WIFE. It was when we were still poor that we bought them. How touching it is to look at them, those poor, dear toys!

MAN. I can't help it, I *must* take them in my hands. Here's the horse with the tail torn off. Hop, hop, horsie! Where are you galloping off to? I'm going far, far away, papa, to where the fields are and the green woods. Take me along, horsie. Hop, hop, hop! Sit down, dear papa. And there's the soldier's cap, the cheap cap I tried on myself in fun when I bought it. Who are you? I'm a knight, papa. I'm the bravest, the strongest knight. Where are you going, my little knight? I'm going to kill the dragon, dear papa. I'm going to free the captives, papa. Go, go, my little knight. [*The* WIFE *cries*] And there's our everlasting clown, with his kind, stupid face. But how ragged he is, as if he had come out of a hundred frays. Tinkle, friend, the way you used to tinkle. What, you can't? Only one bell left, you say? Well, I'll throw you on the floor. [*Throws down the toy*]

WIFE. What are you doing? Remember how often our boy kissed his funny face.

MAN. Yes, that was wrong of me. Forgive me, friend, forgive me. [*He bends down with difficulty and picks up the clown*] Still laughing? Don't. I'll put you away, out of sight. Don't be angry, I can't bear your smile now. Go and laugh in a place where I can't see you.

WIFE. It breaks my heart to hear you speak like that. Believe me, our son will get well. It wouldn't be just if the young were to die before the old, would it?

MAN. Just? Where have you ever seen justice, wife?

WIFE. Please, dear husband, I beg you, kneel down beside me, and let us both pray to God.

MAN. It's hard for an old man to bend his old knees.

WIFE. Bend them. You should — you must.

MAN. He will not hear me, He whose ear I've never troubled with either praise or entreaty. You pray. You are the mother.

WIFE. You pray — you are the father. If a father is not to pray for his son, who is? To whom are you leaving him? Can one person tell the same things in the same way as the two of us together?

MAN. Very well. Maybe eternal justice will answer the prayers of an old man who bends his old knees.

[*Both go down on their knees, their faces turned to the corner where the* UNKNOWN *stands motionless; their arms are folded over their breasts while they pray*]

THE MOTHER'S PRAYER. God, I beg you, let my son live. I can understand only one thing, I can say only one thing, only one thing — God, let my son live. I have no other words, all is dark around me, everything is falling. I understand nothing, and there's such a terror in my heart, O Lord, that I can say only this one thing — God, let my son live! Let him live! Forgive me for praying so poorly. But I cannot pray in any other way. You understand, O Lord, I can't. Look at me! Just look at me! Do you see? Do you see how my head shakes, do you see how my hands shake? But what are my hands, O Lord! Have pity on him. He is so young — he has a birthmark on his right hand. Let him live, even if only a little while, a little while. He is so young, such a mere foolish child — he's still fond of sweets. I bought him grapes. Pity — have pity!

[*She weeps in a subdued way, covering her face with her hands.* MAN *speaks without looking at her*]

THE FATHER'S PRAYER. Here I am praying, you see. I've bent my old knees. I've prostrated myself in the dust before you. I'm kissing the ground, do you see? Maybe I have sometimes offended you. If so, forgive me, forgive me. It is true, I was haughty, arrogant. I demanded and did not beg. Often I condemned — forgive me. And if you wish, if this be your will, punish me, but spare my son. Spare him, I beg you. Not for mercy, not for pity do I pray you. I pray for justice. You are old, and I am old too. You will understand more easily than I. Bad people wanted to kill him, people who insult you by their deeds and defile your earth — bad, heartless people, who throw stones from behind corners. From behind

corners, the scoundrels! Do not then, I pray you, permit the fulfilment of this evil deed. Stay the blood, give back the life — give back the life to my noble son! You took everything away from me, but did I ever ask you like a beggar: "Give me back my wealth, give me back my friends, give me back my talent"? No, never. I did not even ask you for my talent, and you know what his talent means to a man. It is more than life. I thought perhaps that's the way it ought to be, and I bore everything, bore everything with pride. But now I ask you on my knees, in the dust, kissing the earth: "Give back my son's life." I kiss your earth!

[*He rises.* SOMEONE *called He listens indifferently to the father's and mother's prayers*]

WIFE. I'm afraid your prayer was not humble enough. There was a certain tone of pride in it.

MAN. No, no, my wife, I spoke well to Him, the way a man should speak. He cannot love cringing flatterers better than brave, proud men who speak the truth. No, wife, you cannot understand. Now I believe also and feel reassured — in fact, I am happy. I feel that I too still signify something to my boy, and it makes me glad. Go and see if he's asleep. He needs a lot of good, hard sleep.

[*The* WIFE *goes out.* MAN, *with a friendly look to the corner where* SOMEONE IN GRAY *stands, picks up the toy clown, plays with it, and gives its red nose a quick kiss. At that instant his* WIFE *enters and* MAN *speaks shamefacedly*]

MAN. I was begging his pardon. I insulted this fool. Well, how is our dear boy?

WIFE. He is so pale.

MAN. That's nothing. It'll pass away. He lost a lot of blood.

WIFE. It makes me so sad to look at his poor shorn head. He had such beautiful golden curls.

MAN. They had to be cut so that the wound could be washed. Never mind, wife, his hair will grow again and be still finer. Did you keep what was cut off? Be sure to keep it. His precious blood is on it.

WIFE. Yes, I put it away in the chest, the last one left of all our wealth.

MAN. Don't worry about wealth. Just wait until our son begins to work. He'll restore all we've lost. I feel well again, wife, and I firmly believe in our future. Do you remember our poor little rosy room? The good neighbors scattered oak leaves in it, and you made a wreath of them and put it on my head and said I was a genius.

WIFE. I say so still. Other people have ceased to appreciate you, but not I.

MAN. No, my dear little wife, you're wrong. What genius creates outlives the old dirty bundle of rags known as the body, whereas I am still living, and my productions —

WIFE. No, they're not dead and they never will die. Do you remember that corner house you built ten years ago? Every evening at sunset you go to look at it. Is there a more beautiful building in the whole city, is there any with more depth to it?

MAN. Yes, I purposely built it so that the last rays of the setting sun should fall upon it and set its windows aglow. When the whole city is in darkness, my house is still taking leave of the sun. It was well done, and perhaps it will survive me a little while at least. What do you think?

WIFE. Of course, my friend.

MAN. The only thing that hurts, wife, is that the people have forgotten me so soon. They might have remembered me a little longer, just a little longer.

WIFE. They have forgotten what they knew, and ceased to love what they loved.

MAN. They might have remembered me a little longer, a little longer.

WIFE. I saw a young artist near that house. He studied it carefully and made a sketch of it in his sketch-book.

MAN. Ah, why didn't you tell me that before? It's highly significant, highly significant. It means that my ideas are accepted and handed down by others, and even if I am forgotten, my ideas will live. It is tremendously significant.

WIFE. Yes, my dear, you are not forgotten. Do you remember the young man who bowed so reverently to you on the street?

MAN. Yes, that's so, wife. He was a fine, very fine youth. He had such a nice young face. It's good you reminded me of his bow. It has sent a ray of brightness into my heart. But

I feel sleepy. I must be tired. I am old too, my dear little gray wife. Have you noticed it?

WIFE. You're just as handsome as ever.

MAN. And my eyes are bright?

WIFE. Yes, your eyes are bright.

MAN. And my hair is black as pitch?

WIFE. It's so white, so like snow that it's even more beautiful.

MAN. And no wrinkles?

WIFE. Yes, there are little wrinkles on your face, but —

MAN. Of course, I know I'm a beauty. To-morrow I'll buy myself a uniform and enter the light cavalry. Yes? [*His* WIFE *laughs*]

WIFE. There, you're joking too, as in olden times. But lie down here and sleep a little. I'll go to look after our boy. Don't worry, I won't leave him. I'll call you when he wakes. You don't care to kiss an old wrinkled hand, do you?

MAN [*kissing her hand*]. Go, you're the most beautiful woman I've ever known.

WIFE. And the wrinkles?

MAN. What wrinkles? I only see a dear, kind, good, sensible face. Nothing else. Don't take offence at my stern tone. Go to the boy, watch him, stay with him like a quiet shadow of gentleness and love. And if he is disturbed in his sleep, sing him a song as you used to do. And put the grapes nearer, so that he can reach them.

[*The* WIFE *goes out.* MAN *lies down on the sofa, his head toward the spot where* SOMEONE IN GRAY *stands immobile, so that His hand almost touches* MAN'S *gray, dishevelled hair.* MAN *falls asleep quickly*]

SOMEONE IN GRAY. Man has fallen into a sound, sweet sleep, deceived by hope. His breath is soft as a child's, his heart beats calmly and evenly, bringing him relief. He knows not that in a few moments his son will die. In mysterious dream-fancies a picture of impossible happiness arises before him.

It seems to him that he and his son are drifting in a white boat along a beautiful, quiet stream. It seems to him that it is a glorious day, and he sees the deep sky and the transparent crystal water. He hears the rustling of the reeds as they part before the boat. It seems to him that he is happy and glad. All his feelings betray him.

Suddenly he is disturbed. The terrible truth has entered through the thick veil of sleep and stung his thoughts.

"Why is your golden hair cut so short, my boy? Why?"

"I had a headache, papa, that's why."

And deceived once more, he feels happy again, sees the deep sky, and hears the rustling of the parting reeds.

He knows not that his son is already dying. He hears not how, in a last senseless hope, with a child's faith in the power of adults, his son is calling him without words, with his heart: "Papa, papa, I am dying! Hold me!" Man sleeps soundly and sweetly, and in the deceptive, mysterious fancies there arises before him the picture of impossible happiness. Awake, Man! Your son is dead.

[MAN *lifts his head, frightened, and rises*]

MAN. Ha! What is it? I thought I heard someone call me.

[*At that moment many women behind the scenes burst into a wail — the loud, long-drawn wail over the dead. The* WIFE *enters, frightfully pale*]

MAN. Dead?

WIFE. Yes, he is dead.

MAN. Did he call me?

WIFE. No, he never awoke. He didn't call anyone. He is dead — my son, my dear, darling boy!

[*She falls on her knees before* MAN *and sobs, clasping his knees.* MAN *puts his hand on her hand and, turning to the corner where* SOMEONE IN GRAY *stands indifferently, speaks in a sobbing, but terrible voice*]

MAN. You insulted a woman, scoundrel! You killed a boy! [*His* WIFE *sobs.* MAN *softly strokes her hair with his trembling hand*] Don't cry, my dear, don't cry. He will scoff at our tears, just as He scoffed at our prayers. And you — I don't know who you are — God, Devil, Fate, or Life — I curse you!

[MAN *speaks the following in a loud, powerful voice, one arm about his wife as if to protect her, the other arm fiercely extended toward the* UNKNOWN]

MAN'S CURSE. I curse everything that you have given. I curse the day on which I was born. I curse the day on which I shall die. I curse the whole of my life, its joys and its sorrows. I curse myself. I curse my eyes, my ears,

my tongue. I curse my heart and my head, and I fling everything back at your cruel face, a senseless Fate! Be accursed, be forever accursed! With my curses I conquer you. What else can you do to me? Hurl me to the ground, I will laugh and shout in your face: "Be accursed!" Seal my mouth with the clamps of death, with my last thought I will shout into your stupid ears: "Be accursed, be accursed!" Take my body, tear at it like a dog, drag it into the darkness — I am not in it. I have disappeared, but disappearing I shall repeat: "Be accursed, be accursed!" Through the woman whom you have insulted, through the boy whom you have killed, I convey to you the curses of Man!

[*He turns in silence, with fiercely uplifted hand.* SOMEONE IN GRAY *listens passively to the curses. The flame of the candle flickers as if blown by the wind. Thus they stand for some time in tense silence, confronting each other,* MAN *and* SOMEONE IN GRAY. *The wailing behind the scenes grows louder and more prolonged, passing into a doleful chant*]

THE FIFTH SCENE

THE DEATH OF MAN

An uncertain, unsteady, blinking light, so dim that at first nothing is distinguishable. When the eye grows accustomed to it, the following scene becomes visible.

A long, wide room with a very low ceiling and windowless. The entrance is down a flight of steps from somewhere above. The walls are bare and dirty and resemble the coarse, stained hide of some huge animal. Along the entire back wall up to the stairs runs a bar with a top of smooth glass. This is covered with bottles full of differently colored liquors that are arranged in regular rows. Behind a low table sits the BARTENDER, *immobile, with his hands folded across his paunch. His white face is blotched with red. His head is bald, and he has a large, reddish beard. He wears an expression of utter calm and indifference, which he maintains throughout, never changing his seat or his attitude.*

DRUNKARDS, *both men and women, sit at small tables on wooden stools. Their number seems to be augmented by their shadows dancing on the walls and ceiling.*

It is one endless monotony of repulsive ugliness and desolation. The men's faces resemble masks with the various features disproportionately magnified or reduced: big noses, or no noses at all; eyes staring savagely, almost starting from their sockets, or eyes narrowed to scarcely visible slits and points; huge Adam's apples and tiny chins. Their hair is tangled, frowzy, dirty, covering half the face on some of them. Despite their differences, a horrible sameness is stamped upon their faces: a greenish, ghastly tinge of decay and an expression that appears grotesque in some, gloomy and stupidly timid in others.

They are dressed in dull rags, with here a bony arm bared, there a sharp knee, and there again a frightfully sunken chest. Some are almost entirely naked. The women differ little from the men, except that they are even uglier and more uncouth. All have trembling heads and hands and walk with an uncertain step, as if on a slippery, or hilly, or sliding surface. Their voices, too, are all alike, rough and hoarse. They speak as uncertainly as they walk, as if their lips were frozen and refused to obey.

In the centre, at a separate table, sits MAN, *his gray, unkempt head leaning on his arms. In this position he remains throughout the scene, except during the one moment when he speaks. He is dressed very poorly.*

In the corner stands SOMEONE IN GRAY, *with the candle burned nearly to the end. The slender blue flame flickers, now bending, now striving upward with its sharp little tongue. Its blue throws a ghastly glare on His face and chin.*

THE DRUNKARDS' CONVERSATION.

— Oh my! Oh my!

— Look, everything is swaying so strangely. There's nothing to rest your eyes on.

— Everything is shaking as in a fever — the people, the chair, the ceiling.

— Everything is floating and rocking as on waves.

— Do you hear a noise? I hear a kind of noise, as if an iron wheel were

rumbling, or stones falling from a mountain, large stones coming down like rain.

— It's the ringing in your ears.

— It's the tingling of your blood. I feel my blood. It flows heavy through my veins, thick, thick, black, smelling of rum. And when it gets to my heart, it all falls down, and it's terrible.

— It seems to me I see flashes of lightning.

— I see huge, red woodpiles and people burning on them. It's disgusting to smell the roasting flesh.

— Dark shadows circle around the piles. They are drunk, the shadows are. Hey, invite me! I'll dance with you.

— Oh my! Oh my!

— I am happy, too. Who will laugh with me? Nobody. So I'll laugh by myself. [*He laughs*]

— A charming woman is kissing my lips. She smells of musk and her teeth are like a crocodile's. She wants to bite me. Get away, you dirty hussy!

— I am not a dirty hussy. I am an old pregnant snake. I've been watching a whole hour to see little snakes come out of my body below and crawl around. Say, don't step on my little snakes.

— Where are you going?

— Who's walking there? Sit down. You make the whole house shake when you walk.

— I can't. I feel awful sitting down.

— I too. When I am sitting I feel a horror running through my whole body.

— So do I. Let me go.

[*Three or four* DRUNKARDS *reel aimlessly about, getting tangled up in the chairs*]

— Look what it's doing. It's been jumping for two hours, trying to get on my knee. It just misses by an inch. I drive it away and it comes back again.

— Black cockroaches are creeping under my skull and buzzing.

— My brain is falling apart. I feel the gray matter separating. My brain is like rotten cheese. It stinks.

— There's some sort of a corpse here. I smell it.

— Oh my! Oh my!

— I'll sneak up to her to-night and cut her throat.

— The blood will flow. It's flowing already. See how red it is.

— I am constantly being followed by three men. They are calling me into a dark corner of the vacant lot, and they want to kill me. They are already at the door.

— Who is walking on the walls and ceiling?

— Good Lord! They have come to take me.

— Who?

— They.

— My tongue is getting paralyzed. I'll cry. [*Cries*]

— My whole body is coming out. I'll soon be turned inside out, and then I'll be all red.

— Listen, listen. Ho! Somebody! A monster is going for me. He's raising his hand. Help! Ho!

— What is it? Help! A spider!

— Help!

[*For some time they shout "Help!" hoarsely*]

— We are all drunkards. Let's call down all the people from above. It's so disgusting up there.

— No, don't. When I leave here and go out on the street, it rampages and tears about like a wild beast and soon throws me off my feet.

— We've all come here. We drink rum and it gives us joy.

— It gives us fright. I shiver the whole day from fright.

— Fright is better than life. Who wants to return to life?

— I don't.

— I don't. I'd rather croak here. I don't want to live.

— No one!

— Oh my! Oh my!

— Why does Man come here? He drinks little and just sits still. We don't want him.

— Let him go to his own house. He has a house of his own.

— Fifteen rooms.

— Don't touch him. He has no place to go to any more.

— He has fifteen rooms.

— They're empty. Only rats run around and fight in them.

— And his wife.

— He hasn't any. Seems she died.

[*During this conversation and the following,* OLD WOMEN *in strange head-gear enter quietly and replace unnoticeably the* DRUNKARDS, *who quietly depart. The women mingle in the conversation, but in such a way that no one notices it*]

Conversation of Drunkards and Old Women. He'll soon die, too. He can scarcely drag himself along, he's so weak.

— He has fifteen rooms.

— Listen to the beating of his heart. It's uneven and faint. It'll soon stop beating altogether.

— Hey, Man, give us an invitation to your house. You have fifteen rooms.

— It'll soon stop beating altogether, that old, sick, feeble heart of Man!

— He's asleep, the drunken fool. It's dreadful to sleep, and yet he sleeps. He might die in his sleep.

— Hey, there, wake him up!

— Do you remember how it used to beat when it was young and strong?

[*A low laugh is heard*]

— Who's laughing? There are some here who have no business to be here.

— It just seems so to you. We are all alone, only we drunkards.

— I'll go out on the street and start a fight. I've been robbed. I'm stark naked, and my skin is green.

— Good evening.

— The wheel is rumbling again. Oh, Lord, they'll crush me! Help!

[*No one responds*]

— Good evening.

— Do you remember his birth? I believe you were there.

— I must be dying. Good Lord! Good Lord! Who will carry me to the grave? Who will bury me? I'll be lying like a dog on the street. People will step over me, wagons will ride over me. They'll crush me. Oh, my God! Oh, my God! [*Cries*]

— Permit me to congratulate you, my dear friend, on the birth of your child.

— I am positive there is a mistake here. For a circle to fall out of a straight line is an absurdity. I'll demonstrate it on the spot.

— You're right.

— Oh my! Oh my!

— It's only ignoramuses in mathematics who will permit it. I won't. I won't permit it, do you hear?

— Do you remember the rosy dress and the little bare neck?

— And the flowers? The lilies-of-the-valley on which the dew never dried, and the violets, and the green grass?

— Don't touch, don't touch the flowers, girls.

[*They utter a low and suppressed laugh*]

— Oh my! Oh my!

[*The* Drunkards *have all gone. Their places are taken by the* Old Women. *The light grows steady and very faint. The figure of the* Unknown *is sharply outlined, and so is* Man's *gray head, on which a faint light falls from above*]

Old Women's Conversation. Good evening.

— Good evening. What a splendid night!

— Here we are together again. How are you feeling?

— I cough a little.

[*They laugh suppressedly*]

— It won't take long now. He'll die soon.

— Look at the candle. The flame is blue and thin and spreading sideways. There's no more wax. It's only the wick that's burning.

— It doesn't want to go out.

— When did you ever see a flame that did want to go out?

— Don't dispute, don't dispute. Whether it wants to go out, or doesn't want to go out, time is flying.

— Do you remember his motor-car? He once almost ran me down.

— And his fifteen rooms?

— I was there a little while ago. The rats almost ate me up, and I caught a cold in the draught. Someone had stolen the window frames, and the wind was blowing through the whole house.

— Did you try the bed in which his wife died? Isn't it soft and nice?

— Yes, I went through all the rooms and let my fancy play a little. They have such a pretty nursery. It's a pity the window frames are knocked out there too, and the wind makes a racket with the litter on the floor. And the child's bed too is so dear. Now the rats have made their nest in it and breed their children there.

— Such dear, naked little rats.

[*They titter*]

— And in his study the toys are lying on the table: a horse without a tail, a soldier's cap, and a red-nosed clown. I played a little with them. I put on the soldier's cap. It was very becoming to me. But there's such a lot of dust on the things. I got all dirty.

— But did you go into the drawing-room where the ball was given? It's so gay there.

— Yes, I did. Fancy what I saw.

It was dark, the windows were broken, and the wind was playing with the wall-paper —

— Making a sound as of music.

— And in the darkness the guests were squatting on their knees at the wall — and you should have seen how they looked!

— We know.

— And they barked: "How rich! How magnificent! How brilliant! How rich!"

— You're joking, of course.

— Of course I'm joking. You know I have a funny disposition.

— How rich! How magnificent!

— How gay!

[*They titter*]

— Let's remind him of it!

— How rich! How magnificent!

— Do you remember how the music played at your ball?

— He's going to die soon.

— The dancers circled about, circled about, and the music played so gently, so beautifully. They played this way.

[*They make a semicircle about* MAN *and hum the tune played by the musicians at the ball*]

— Let's get up a ball. It's so long since I've danced.

— Imagine that this is a palace, a magnificent, an exquisitely beautiful palace.

— Call the musicians. Why, you can't have a ball without music.

— Musicians!

— You remember?

[*They sing. At that instant the three musicians who played at the ball come down the stairs. The one with the violin adjusts his handkerchief on his shoulder with great precision, and all three begin to play, making an exaggerated effort. But the notes are soft and gentle as in a dream*]

— There you have the ball!

— How rich! How magnificent!

— How brilliant!

— You remember, don't you?

[*Singing softly to the music, they begin to circle about* MAN, *imitating in a wild, monstrous fashion the movements of the girls in the white dresses who danced at the ball. At the first musical phrase they circle, at the second they join and part gracefully and quietly, whispering*]

— Do you remember?

— You're going to die soon — do you remember?

— Do you remember?

— Do you remember?

— You're going to die soon — do you remember?

— Do you remember?

[*The dance grows brisker, the movements sharper. Strange, whining notes mingle into the singing of the* OLD WOMEN. *An equally strange laugh passes around the circle of dancers, suppressed and quiet at first. As each one glides past* MAN, *she flings an abrupt whisper into his ear*]

— Do you remember?

— Do you remember?

— How gentle! How exquisite!

— What balm to the soul! Do you remember?

— You're going to die soon, you're going to die soon.

— You're going to die soon —

— Do you remember?

[*They circle more quickly, their movements growing still more abrupt. Suddenly there is silence and they halt. The musicians grow rigid with the instruments in their hands. The dancers remain fixed in the same position in which they were when the silence fell.* MAN *rises, straightens himself, throws back his gray, beautiful, terribly majestic head, and calls out in a surprisingly loud voice, full of sorrow and wrath. After each short phrase a brief but profound pause follows*]

MAN. Where is my squire? Where is my sword? Where is my shield? I am disarmed! Come to me quick! Quick! Be accurs —

[*He sinks down on the chair and dies, his head falling backward. At the same moment the candle flares up brightly and goes out. All objects are buried in a dense twilight which seems to be descending the stairs until it gradually covers everything. The face of dead* MAN *alone remains bright. Low, vague conversation, whisperings and derisive mockery are heard from the* OLD WOMEN]

SOMEONE IN GRAY. Silence! Man has died! [*Profound silence. Then the*

same cold, indifferent voice repeats from a remote depth, like an echo] Silence! Man has died!

[*Profound silence. The twilight thickens, but the mice-like figures of the* OLD WOMEN *are still seen standing rigid. Presently they begin to circle about the dead body mutely, quietly; then they begin to sing softly, and the musicians begin to play. The gloom thickens, the music and the song grow louder and louder, and the wild dance grows more unrestrained, until finally it ceases to be a dance, the* OLD WOMEN *merely whirling about the dead man, arm in arm, stamping their feet, screeching, and laughing a wild, prolonged laugh. Complete darkness descends. Only the face of* MAN *is still lighted up. Then this light too is extinguished. Black impenetrable darkness prevails.*

In the darkness are heard the movements of the mad dancers, their screeching and laughter, and the discordant, desperately loud sounds of the music. Just when they have reached their highest pitch, all the sounds and noises withdraw rapidly somewhere and die away. Stillness]

THE END

THE DAUGHTER OF JORIO

(*1904*)

By Gabriele D'Annunzio

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO AND "THE DAUGHTER OF JORIO"

I AM reminded, in a study of D'Annunzio, of certain nervous qualities in the poetry of Verhaeren. In the value of language as literature, and as an incentive to the actor's work, I am reminded of Rostand. But the nerves of Verhaeren and D'Annunzio are not the same; their artistry served different purposes: one used art with a distinct social purpose and vision, in sounding a contemporaneousness intensely absorbing; the other uses his art for the sheer joy of the art, and, with a wild disregard for moral consequences, gives us nature subject to no laws but itself. There was social constructiveness to Verhaeren; there is no purpose — in the thesis sense — to D'Annunzio. Hence he arouses the antagonism of the Puritan, and, when one tries to pigeonhole him, one finds him outside the limitation of the modern social drama. Like Rostand, who wrote for Coquelin and Bernhardt, D'Annunzio's inspiration was Eleonora Duse, and the complement of dramatist and actress raises the interesting viewpoint of how much a part of the glory of the Italian theatre has been the Italian actor. In her art, Duse did the same thing that D'Annunzio does in his temperamental words of passion. As Stark Young, in "The Flower in Drama", says of her: "Your art is your own perpetual dilation of reality. . . . You never conclude, you never solve, you only create and reveal." D'Annunzio creates and reveals, no matter how disagreeable the psychology. His interest in sheer art makes him open to the criticism of inhumanity. Possessed of luxuriant imagery, and the passionate expression of romanticism, D'Annunzio is outside the trend of democratic interest, which has been at the basis of all modern drama. He has posed as a patriot since early years, his first poems indicating his future impetuous political rôle. As one writer puts it, "Many of the poems of his maturity were of an imperialistic fervor . . . the tempestuous, Nietzschean spirit of self-assertion which is the beginning and end of his philosophy would find a political expression."

Huneker speaks of D'Annunzio as an Italian Swinburne; besides their luxuriant Renaissance spirit, they both passionately loved the sea. D'Annunzio's active interest in the Italian Navy, which led to his imperialistic expressions regarding the power of Italy on the sea, found expression in his poetry. From the time of his "Naval Odes", the historical student has an interesting course to follow in tracing D'Annunzio's hatred of Austria, and his rise in popular favor, until, during the Great War, his influence became of the utmost importance to the Government, and threatened insurrection among his followers, who murmured their desire to make him Dictator. There is much for the political observer to follow in the events leading up to D'Annunzio's Fiume escapade, in itself a drama, not such as he might write, but such as Rostand might have imagined, in the De Bergerac spirit.

What is D'Annunzio? — fundamentally not a dramatist, but rather a poet and a novelist, and above all an artist dealing with words as a medium. Henry James

noted his absorbing characteristics: "First, his rare notation of states of excited sensibility; second, his splendid visual sense, the quick generosity of his response to the message, as we nowadays say, of aspects and appearances, to the beauty of places and things; third, his ample and exquisite style, his curious, various, inquisitive, always active employment of language as a means of communication and representation."

I thus relate him to Maeterlinck, but more intimately to Hoffmansthal. He is part of that development which spells reaction against the Ibsen school, so well sustained by Björnson and Hauptmann. There is no spiritual balance to D'Annunzio, in the sense that the Kingdom of God lies within one; there is no quietude. I read recently a cablegram from a French actress who had visited the soldier-poet (D'Annunzio, despite his fifty-six years, was interested in aviation during the war) at Gordone, where it was reported he lived in monastic severity. She declared: "I realized while I was with him, what a powerful appeal faith can make to a man, artist, poet, thinker, hero, who has traversed the flame of sacrifice. Life can give nothing more to D'Annunzio. For him, solitude is the greatest, most voluptuous, joy."

In contrast with this, I recall what an Italian critic wrote of D'Annunzio, in 1916, analyzing the form of Christian mysticism toward which he had been tending — a mysticism that "was nothing more than an exaggeration of the sensibility which in all his earlier work had been straining to create superhuman experiences and intuitions of life." He said further:

"D'Annunzio's religiousness as it appears, for instance, in his "San Sebastian", is, however, a false religiousness, just as the D'Annunzian superman is a false man. It is the product of an irritated sensibility, not of a real spiritual intimacy. So true is this that he fails to assimilate the central act of the complex religious life, the simple, direct act of communion with the divinity."

The student would do well to read, as a preparation in the study of Italian drama, Professor Lander MacClintock's very concise survey of "The Contemporary Drama of Italy", wherein are some sound criticisms and estimates based on what seems to be a first-hand survey of the subject. In the case of D'Annunzio, Professor MacClintock carefully analyzes eighteen plays, concluding with the moving-picture spectacle of "Cabiria", and measures how far the dramatist is a part of the modern movement, how far he falls short; he deprecates the poet and artist because he does not find as well the "message" with which so much of the movement influenced by Ibsen contented itself. He writes:

"To present human beings is the supreme duty and the paramount privilege of the drama. Here D'Annunzio misses fire; he does not understand or care about modern life; he lives in his own world apart from the rest, a world compounded of the partially unreconcilable elements of literary reminiscence, self-worship, hysterical patriotism, blood lust, instinct and ritualism, shut off from actuality by an impenetrable ego. Socialism to him is merely the triumph of the many-headed beast, the people; morality the empty prejudice of a worn-out tradition; comradeship a mockery; the only reality is beauty and self."

If this last is so, and I think it is, then why quarrel for what is not in D'Annunzio? There are clearly defined schools for and against D'Annunzio, and, while one looks in the modern drama for the constructive thinker and his thesis, I wonder whether D'Annunzio is not nearer the "newest" demand in the theatre — a beauty wherein atmosphere is as much dependent on the objectivity of inward passion as on the

moral purpose, axiomatically defined. D'Annunzio, like nature, has no moral purpose.

Professor MacClintock has challenged criticism, however commendable his thorough survey of the Italian's dramatic work. Mr. Ralph Roeder, in the *Theatre Arts Magazine* for April, 1920, has a very discriminating analysis of D'Annunzio, the artist. The entire article is worthy of close scrutiny, but none of it more so than this paragraph, which applies to what I have referred to as the "newest" in the theatre:

"Does any one object that literature is not one of the graphic arts? Some one perhaps who has not seen it practised as such? To him D'Annunzio. In his vision of the world we find design, rhythm, color, plasticity, emotion, phrased moreover with all the seductions of verbal music, to interpret for us the irridescent pageantry of existence, the flow of appearances, the play of illusion, which life is for him, in his ultimate wisdom; and because he so commandingly embodies for us these graphic and musical instincts of his race, it is in him that we may admire the archtype of Italian artist. And because he has brought into the theatre these qualities which so preëminently belong to it — the theatre which is the consummation of the graphic, the plastic, the musical, and the literary arts — his contribution to it has made the Italian drama an art which the lover of Italy may study, and recognize in it that characteristic of the race which he has been accustomed heretofore to seek in the museum only. . . ."

Read D'Annunzio carefully, and you will see that what Arthur Symons wrote about him in 1900 is holding, not only in his work as a novelist, but as a dramatist as well. For him "there exist in the world only two things, sex and art. To the religionist, this is worse than pagan, it is neurotic."

The bare facts of D'Annunzio's life, combative, tempestuous, are to be found in any handbook. He was born at Pescara, in the Abruzzi, Italy, in 1864, and "The Daughter of Jorio" ("La Figlia di Jorio"), 1904, is one of a trilogy, reminiscent of his native town.

THE DAUGHTER OF JORIO

(1904)

A PASTORAL TRAGEDY

By GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN
BY CHARLOTTE PORTER, PIETRO ISOLA,
AND ALICE HENRY

Copyright, 1904,
By GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

Copyright, 1907,
By DIRCÉ ST. CYR

Copyright, 1907,
By THE POET LORE COMPANY

Copyright, 1907,
By LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

TO
THE LAND OF THE ABRUZZI, TO MY MOTHER
TO MY SISTERS, TO MY BROTHERS
ALSO
TO MY FATHER, ENTOMBED, TO ALL MY DEAD
AND TO ALL MY RACE BETWEEN THE
MOUNTAIN AND THE SEA
THIS SONG OF THE ANTIQUE BLOOD
I CONSECRATE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Lazaro Di Roio, *Father of Aligi*
Candia Della Leonessa, *Mother of Aligi*
Aligi, *The Shepherd-Artist*
Splendore, Favetta, Ornella, *Aligi's Sisters*
Vienda Di Giave, *Aligi's Bride*
Maria Di Giave, *Mother of the Bride*
Teodula Di Cinzio, La Cinerella, Monica Della Cogna, Anna Di Bova, Felavia, La Catalana, Maria Cora: *The Kindred*
Mila Di Codra, *the Daughter of Jorio, the Sorcerer dalle Farne*
Femo Di Nerfa
Jenne Dell' Eta
Iona Di Midia
The Old Herbwoman
The Saint of the Mountain
The Treasure Diviner
The Devil-Possessed Youth
A Shepherd
Another Shepherd
A Reaper
Another Reaper
The Crowd of People
The Chorus of the Kindred
The Chorus of Reapers
The Chorus of Wailers

Scene: The Land of the Abruzzi.

Time: Many years ago. (Placed about the sixteenth century by the Painter Michetti, who designed the scenes and costumes for the initial production in Milan.)

THE DAUGHTER OF JORIO

ACT I

SCENE I. *A room on the ground floor of a rustic house. The large entrance door opens on a large sunlit yard. Across the door is stretched, to prevent entrance, a scarlet woolen scarf, held in place at each end by a forked hoe and a distaff. At one side of the door jamb is a waxen cross to keep off evil spirits. A smaller closed door, with its architrave adorned with boxwood green, is on the wall at the right, and close against the same wall are three ancient wooden chests. At the left, and set in the depth of the wall, are a chimney and fire-place with a prominent hood; and a little at one side a small door, and near this an ancient loom. In the room are to be seen such utensils and articles of furniture as tables, benches, hasps, a swift, and hanks of flax and wool hanging from light ropes drawn between nails or hooks. Also to be seen are jugs, dishes, plates, bottles and flasks of various sizes and materials, with many gourds, dried and emptied. Also an ancient bread and flour chest, the cover of it having a carved panel representing the image of the Madonna. Beside this the water basin and a rude old table. Suspended from the ceiling by ropes is a wide, broad board laden with cheeses. Two windows, iron-grated and high up from the ground, give light, one at each side of the large door, and in each of the gratings is stuck a bunch of red buckwheat to ward off evil.*

SPLENDORE, FAVETTA, ORNELLA, *the three young sisters, are kneeling each in front of one of the three chests containing the wedding dresses. They are bending over them and picking out suitable dresses and ornaments for the bride. Their gay, fresh tones are like the chanting of morning songs.*

SPLENDORE. What's your will, our own Vienda?
FAVETTA. What's your will, our dear new sister?
SPLENDORE. Will you choose the gown of woolen,
Would you sooner have the silken,
Sprayed with flowrets red and yellow?
ORNELLA [*singing*]. Only of green shall be my arraying.
Only of green for Santo Giovanni,
For mid the green meadows he came to seek me,
Oili, Oili, Oila!
SPLENDORE. Look! Here is the bodice of wondrous embroidery,
And the yoke with the gleaming thread of silver,
Petticoat rich of a dozen breadths' fulness,
Necklace strung with hundred-beaded coral, —
All these given you by your new mother.
ORNELLA [*singing*]. Only of green be or gown or bridal chamber!
Oili, oili, oila!
FAVETTA. What's your will, our own Vienda?
SPLENDORE. What's your will, our dear new sister?
ORNELLA. Pendant earrings, clinging necklace,
Blushing ribbons, cherry red?
Hear the ringing bells of noonday,
Hear the bells ring out high noon!
SPLENDORE. See the kindred hither coming,
On their heads the hampers bearing,
Hampers laden with wheat all golden,
And you yet not dressed and ready!
ORNELLA. Bounding, rebounding,
Sheep pass, the hills rounding.
The wolf, through valleys winding,
The nut he seeks is finding, —
The pistachio nut is finding.
See, the Bride of the Morning!
Matinal as the field-mouse

Going forth at the dawning,
As the woodchuck and squirrel.
Hear, O hear, the bells' whirl!
[*All these words are spoken very swiftly, and at the close* ORNELLA *laughs joyously, her two sisters joining with her*]
THE THREE SISTERS. Oh! Aligi, why then don't you come?
SPLENDORE. Oh! in velvet then must you dress?
FAVETTA. Seven centuries quite, must you rest
With your beautiful, magical Spouse?
SPLENDORE. Oh, your father stays at the harvesting,
Brother mine, and the star of the dawning
In his sickle-blade is showing, —
In his sickle, no rest knowing.
FAVETTA. And your mother has flavored the wine-cup
And anise-seed mixed with the water,
Sticking cloves in the roast meat
And sweet thyme in the cheeses.
SPLENDORE. And a lamb of the flock we have slaughtered,
Yea, a yearling, but fattened one season,
With head markings and spottings of sable,
For the Bride and the Bridegroom.
FAVETTA. And the mantle, long-sleeved, and cowl-hooded,
For Astorgio we chose it and kept it, —
For the long-lived gray man of the mountain,
So our fate upon that he foretell us.
ORNELLA. And to-morrow will be San Giovanni,
Dear, my brother! with dawn, San Giovanni!
Up the Plaia hill then shall I hie me,
To behold once again the head severed—
In the sun's disc, the holy head severed,
On the platter all gleaming and golden,
Where again the blood runs, flows and babbles.
FAVETTA. Up, Vienda! head all golden,
Keeping long vigil; O golden sweet tresses!
Now they harvest in the grain-fields
Wheat as golden as your tresses.
SPLENDORE. Our mother was saying: "Now heed me!
Three olives I nurtured here with me;
Unto these now a plum have I added.
Ay! three daughters, and, also, a daughter."
ORNELLA. Come, Vienda, golden-plum girl!
Why delay you? Are you writing
To the sun a fair blue letter
That to-night it know no setting?
[*She laughs and the other sisters join in with her. From the small door enters their mother,* CANDIA DELLA LEONESSA]
CANDIA [*playfully chiding*]. Ah! you magpies, sweet cicales!
Once for over-joy of singing
One was burst upon the poplar.
Now the cock's no longer crowing
To awaken tardy sleepers.
Only sing on these cicales, —
These cicales of high noonday.
These three magpies take my roof-tree—
Take my door's wood for a tree-branch.
Still the new child does not heed them.
Oh! Aligi, Aligi, dear fellow!

[*The door opens. The beardless bridegroom appears. He greets them with a grave voice, fixed eyes, and in an almost religious manner*]

ALIGI. All praise to Jesus and to Mary!
You, too, my mother, who this mortal
Christian flesh to me have given,
Be you blessèd, my dear mother!
Blessèd be ye, also, sisters,
Blossoms of my blood!
For you, for me, I cross my forehead,
That never there come before us to thwart us
The enemy subtle, in death, in life,
In heat of sun, or flame of fire,
Or poison, or any enchantment,
Or sweat unholy the forehead moist'ning.
Father, and Saviour, and Holy Spirit!
[*The sisters cross themselves and go out by the small door, carrying the bridal dresses.* ALIGI *approaches his mother as if in a dream*]
CANDIA. Flesh of my flesh, thus touch I your forehead
With bread, with this fair wheaten loaf of white flour,
Prepared in this bowl of a hundred years old,
Born long before thee, born long before me,
Kneaded long on the board of a hundred years old
By these hands that have tended and held you.
On the brow, thus, I touch: Be it sunny and clear!
I touch thus the breast: Be it free from all sighing!

I touch this shoulder, and that: Be it strong!
Let them bear up your arms for long labor!
Let her rest there her head gray or golden!
And may Christ to you speak and you heed him!

[*With the loaf she makes the sign of the cross above her son, who has fallen on his knees before her*]

ALIGI. I lay down and meseemed of Jesus I dreamed.
He came to me saying: "Be not fearful."
San Giovanni said to me: "Rest in safety.
Without holy candles thou shalt not die."
Said he: "Thou shalt not die the death accursèd."
And you, you have cast my lot in life, mother,
Allotted the bride you have chosen for me, —
Your son, and here, within your own house, mother,
You have brought her to couple with me,
That she slumber with me on my pillow,
That she eat with me out of my platter.
Then I was pasturing flocks on the mountain.
Now back to the mountain I must be turning.

[*His mother touches his head with the palm of her hand as if to chase away evil thoughts*]

CANDIA. Rise up, my son! You are strangely talking.
All your words are now changing in color,
As the olive tree changes pressed by the breezes.

[*He rises, as if in a daze*]

ALIGI. But where is my father? Still nowhere I see him.
CANDIA. Gone to the harvesting, out with the reapers,
The good grain reaping, by grace of our Saviour.
ALIGI. I reaped once, too, by his body shaded,
Ere I was signed with the cross on my forehead,
When my brow scarcely reached up to his haunches.
But on my first day a vein here I severed, —
Here where the scar stays. Then with leaves he was bruising
The while he stanched the red blood from flowing,
"Son Aligi," said he unto me, "Son Aligi,
Give up the sickle and take up the sheep-crook:
Be you a shepherd and go to the mountain."
This his command was kept in obedience.
CANDIA. Son of mine, what is this pain the heart of you hurting?
What dream like an incubus over you hovers,
That these your words are like a wayfarer,
Sitting down on his road at night's coming,
Who is halting his footsteps for knowing,
Beyond attaining is his heart's desiring,
Past his ears' hearing the Ave Maria.
ALIGI. Now to the mountain must I be returning.
Mother, where is my stout shepherd's sheep-hook
Used to the pasture paths, daily or nightly?
Let me have that, so the kindred arriving,
May see thereupon all the carving I've carved.

[*His mother takes the shepherd's crook from the corner of the fireplace*]

CANDIA. Lo! here it is, son of mine, take it: your sisters
Have hung it with garlands for Santo Giovanni,
With pinks red and fragrant festooned it.
ALIGI [*pointing out the carving on it*].
And I have them here on the bloodwood all with me,
As if by the hand I were leading my sisters.
So, along they go with me threading green pathways,
Guarding them, mother, — these three virgin damsels, —
See! three bright angels here over them hover,
And three starry comets, and three meek doves also.
And a flower for each one I have carved here,
The growing half-moon and the sun I have carved here;
This is the priestly stole; and this is the cup sacramental;
And this is the belfry of San Biagio.
And this is the river, and this my own cabin;

[*With mystery, as if with second sight*]
But who, who is this one who stands in my doorway?

CANDIA. Aligi, why is it you set me to weeping!

ALIGI. And see at the end here that in the ground enters,
Here are the sheep, and here also their shepherd,
And here is the mountain where I must be going,
Though you weep, though I weep, my mother!

[*He leans on the crook with both hands, resting his head upon them, lost in his thoughts*]

CANDIA. But where then is Hope? What have you made of her, son?

ALIGI. Her face has shone on me seldom;
Carve her, I could not, sooth! mother.

[*From a distance a savage clamor rises*]
Mother, who shouts out so loud there?

CANDIA. The harvesters heated and frenzied,
From the craze of their passions defend them,
From sins of their blood San Giovanni restrain them!

ALIGI. Ah! Who then has drawn but that scarf there,
Athwart the wide door of our dwelling,
Leaning on it the forked hoe and distaff,
That naught enter in that is evil?
Ah! Lay there the ploughshare, the wain, and the oxen,
Pile stones there against both the door-posts,
With slaked lime from all of the lime-kilns,
The bowlder with footprints of Samson,
And Maella Hill with its snow-drifts!

CANDIA. What is coming to birth in your heart, son of mine?
Did not Christ say to you, "Be not fearful"?
Are you awake? Heed the waxen cross there,
That was blessed on the Day of Ascension,
The door-hinges, too, with holy water sprinkled,
No evil spirit can enter our doorway,
Your sisters have drawn the scarlet scarf 'cross it, —
The scarlet scarf you won in the field-match,
Long before you ever became a shepherd,
In the match that you ran for the straightest furrow, —
(You still remember it, son of mine?)
Thus have they stretched it
So that the kindred who must pass through there
Offer what gifts they choose when they enter.
Why do you ask, for you well know our custom?

ALIGI. Mother! mother! I have slept years seven hundred —
Years seven hundred! I come from afar off.
I remember no longer the days of my cradle.

CANDIA. What ails you, son? Like one in a dazement you answer.
Black wine was it your bride poured out for you?
And perhaps you drank it while yet you were fasting,
So that your mind is far off on a journey?
O Mary, blest Virgin! do thou grant me blessing!

[*The voice of* ORNELLA *singing the nuptial song*]
Only of green shall be my arraying,
Only of green for Santo Giovanni.
Oili, oili, oila!

[*The* BRIDE *appears dressed in green and brought forward joyously by the sisters*]

SPLENDORE. Lo! the bride comes whom we have apparelled
With all the joy of the springtime season.

FAVETTA. Of gold and silver the yoke is fashioned,
But all the rest like the quiet verdure.

ORNELLA. You, mother, take her! in your arms take her!
O dear my mother, take and console her!

SPLENDORE. Shedding tears at the bedside we found her,
Thus lamenting for thinking so sorely
Of the gray head at home left so lonely.

ORNELLA. Of the jar full of pinks in the window
Her dear face not again shall lean over.
You, mother, take her! in your arms take her!

CANDIA. Daughter, daughter, with this loaf in blessing
I have touched my own son. Lo! now I divide it,
And over your fair shining head I now break it.
May our house have increase of abundance!

Be thou unto the dough as good leaven
That may swell it out over the bread-board!
Bring unto me peace and ah! do not bring strife to me!

THE THREE SISTERS. So be it! We kiss the earth, mother!

[*They kiss the ground by leaning over and touching it with fore-finger and middle finger, and then touching their lips.* ALIGI *is kneeling on one side as if in deep prayer*]

CANDIA. O now daughter mine to my house be
As the spindle is unto the distaff;
As unto the skein is the spindle;
And as unto the loom is the shuttle!

THE THREE SISTERS. So be it! We kiss the earth, mother!

CANDIA. O Vienda! new daughter, child blessèd!
Lo! midst home and pure food thus I place you.
Lo! The walls of this house — the four corners!
God willing, the sun rises there; sinks there, God willing!
This is the northward, this is the southward.
The ridge-pole this, the eaves with nests hanging,
And the chain and the crane with the andirons;
There the mortar the white salt is crushed in,
And there, too, the crock it is kept in.
O new daughter! I call you to witness
How midst home things and pure food I place you
Both for this life and life everlasting.

THE THREE SISTERS. So be it! We kiss the earth, mother!

[VIENDA *rests her head, weeping, on the shoulder of the mother.* CANDIA *embraces her, still holding a half-loaf in each hand. The cry of the reapers is heard nearer.* ALIGI *rises like one suddenly wakened and goes toward the door. The sisters follow him*]

FAVETTA. Now by the great heat are the reapers all maddened,
They are barking and snapping like dogs at each passer.

SPLENDORE. Now the last of the rows they are reaching,
With the red wine they never mix water.

ORNELLA. At the end of each row, they are drinking,
In the shade of the stack the jug lying.

FAVETTA. Lord of heaven! The heat is infernal,
At her tail bites the old gammer serpent.

ORNELLA [*chanting*]. Oh, for mercy! Wheat and wheat, and stubble, stubble,
First in sun burn the sickles, then wounds they trouble.

SPLENDORE. Oh mercy for father! for his arms tired,
And all his veins with labor swollen.

ORNELLA. O Aligi! you saddest of grooms
Keeping yet in your nostrils sleep's fumes!

FAVETTA. Oh, you know very well the rhyme turned about.
You have placed the good loaf in the jug,
You have poured the red wine in the sack.

SPLENDORE. Lo! now the kindred! Lo! now the women! they are coming.
Up, up! Vienda! and cease your weeping.
Mother! How now! They are coming. Set her free then.
Up! Golden tresses, cease your weeping!
You have wept too long. Your fine eyes are reddened!

[VIENDA *dries her tears on her apron and taking the apron up by the two corners receives in it the two pieces of the loaf from the mother*]

CANDIA. In blood and in milk return it to me!
Goldenhair, come now, sit on the settle.
Oh! Aligi, you too, come sit here! and wake up!
One of you here, one of you there, thus stay ye,
Children, thus, at each side of the door.
Be it wide open for all to see in there
The wide bed so wide that in order to fill it —
The mattress to fill — I used up the strawstack.
Ay! the whole of the stack to the bare pole,
With the crock sticking up on the tip-top!

[CANDIA *and* SPLENDORE *place a small bench each side of the door, where the couple sit composed and silent, looking at each other.* ORNELLA *and* FAVETTA *looking out toward the road at the large door. The yard is in dazzling sunlight*]

FAVETTA. See! They are coming up the road slowly
In single file, all: Teodula di Cinzio
And Cinerella, Monica, Felavia,
And Catalana delle Tre Bisacce,
Anna di Bova, Maria Cora . . . but who is the last one?

CANDIA. Come on then, Splendore, do help me spread out now
The bedspread I wove of silk doubled,
Woven for you, Vienda, dear green bud,
As green as the grass of the meadow,
The sweet grass, early bee, where you hover.

ORNELLA. Who is last? Can you tell us, Vienda?
Oh! I see yellow grain in the hampers,
And it glitters like gold. Who can she be?
Gray at the temple, beneath the white linen,
Gray as the feathery bryony branches.

FAVETTA. Your mommy! dear child, is she your mommy?

[VIENDA *rises suddenly as if to rush to her mother. In so doing she lets the bread fall from her apron. She stops, shocked.* ALIGI *rises and stands so as to prevent the mother from seeing*]

ORNELLA [*greatly concerned, in a frightened voice*]. O Lord save us! Pick it up again.
Pick it up, kiss it, ere mamma see it.

[VIENDA, *terrified and overwhelmed by frightful superstition, is stricken immovable, rigid, staring at the two half-loaves with glassy eyes*]

FAVETTA. Pick it up, kiss it, sad is the angel.
Make a vow silently, promise greatly,
Call on San Sisto, lest Death should appear.

[*From within are heard the blows given with the hand on mattress and pillows and the wind carries to the ear the clamor of the reapers*]

ORNELLA. San Sisto! San Sisto!
Oh! hear ye, and list, oh!
Black death, evil sprite,
By day, by night,
Chase from our walls!
Drive from our souls!
Oh! crumble and tear
The evil eye's snare,
As the sign of the cross I make!

[*While murmuring the conjuring words she rapidly gathers up the two half-loaves, pressing each to* VIENDA'S *lips, kissing them herself, and then placing each in the apron, making the sign of the cross over them. She then leads the bridal couple to their benches, as the first of the women kindred appears at the door with the offerings, stopping in front of the scarlet scarf. The women each carry on the head a hamper of wheat adorned with flowing ribbons of various colors. On each basket rests a loaf of bread, and on top of each loaf a wild flower.* ORNELLA *and* FAVETTA *take each one end of the scarf while still leaving hoe and distaff in place against the wall, but so posed as to bar entrance*]

TEODULA DI CINZIO [*first woman*]. Ohé! Who watches the bridges?

FAVETTA *and* ORNELLA [*in unison*]. Love open-eyed and Love blind.

TEODULA. To cross over there I desire.

FAVETTA. To desire is not to acquire.

TEODULA. I clambered the mountain ridges,
Now down through the valley I'll wind.

ORNELLA. The torrent has taken the bridges,
Too swift runs the river, you'll find.

TEODULA. Set me over in your boat.

FAVETTA. She leaks too fast to keep afloat.

TEODULA. I'll calk her with tow and resin.

ORNELLA. Leaks full seven split and stove her.

TEODULA. Then I'll give you pieces seven.
On your shoulder bear me over.

FAVETTA. Oh, no! Help of mine you must lack.
The wild water fills me with fright.

TEODULA. Lend me a lift on your back.
I'll give you this silver piece bright.

ORNELLA. Too little! Your eight bits, indeed,
Would not keep my ribbons new.

TEODULA. Tuck up your skirt. Plunge in bare-kneed.
A ducat of gold I'll give to you.

[*The first woman,* TEODULA, *gives* ORNELLA *a piece of money. She receives it in her left hand, while the other women come closer to the door. The bridal pair remain seated and silent*]

[CANDIA *and* SPLENDORE *enter from the small door*]

ORNELLA *and* FAVETTA [*in unison*].
Pass on then, O you fair Lady!
And all these in your company!

[ORNELLA *puts the money in her bosom and takes away the distaff,* FAVETTA, *the hoe. They then leave both leaning against the wall.* ORNELLA, *with a quick movement, withdraws the scarf, making it wave like a slender pennant*]

[*The women then enter one by one, in line, still holding their baskets balanced on their heads*]

TEODULA. Peace be with you, Candia della Leonessa!
And peace, too, with you, son of Lazaro di Roio!
And peace to the bride whom Christ has given!

[*She places her basket at the bride's feet and, taking out of it a handful of wheat, she scatters it over* VIENDA'S *head. She then takes another handful and scatters it over* ALIGI'S]

This is the peace that is sent you from Heaven:
That on the same pillow your hair may whiten,
On the same pillow to old age ending.
Nor sin nor vengeance be between you,
Falsehood nor wrath, but love, love only,
Daily, till time for the long, long journey.

[*The next woman repeats the same ceremony and action, the others meanwhile remaining in line awaiting their turn, with the hampers on their heads. The last one, the mother of the bride, remains motionless near the threshold, and dries her face of tears and perspiration. The noise of the riotous reapers increases and seems to come nearer. Besides this noise, from time to time, in pauses, now and again the ringing of bells is heard*]

LA CINERELLA. For this is peace and this is plenty.

[*Suddenly a woman's cry is heard outside, coming from the yard*]

THE VOICE OF THE UNKNOWN WOMAN.
Help! Help! For Jesus' sake, our Saviour!
People of God, O people of God, save ye me!

[*Running, panting from fright and exertion, covered with dust and briars, like a hart run down by a pack of hunting dogs, a woman enters. Her face is covered by a mantle. She looks about bewildered, and withdraws to the corner near the fireplace, opposite to the bridal pair*]

THE UNKNOWN WOMAN. People of God! Oh, save ye me!
The door there! Oh, shut tight the door there,
Put ye up all the bars! Securely. —
They are many, and all have their sickles.
They are crazed, — crazed with heat and strong drinking.
They are brutal with lust and with cursing.
Me would they hunt, — they would seize me;
They would hunt me, they would seize me, — me, —
The creature of Christ, ay, me, —
The unhappy one, doing no evil!
Passing I was — alone — by the roadside. —
They saw me. — They cried. — They insulted.
They hurled sods and stones. — They chased me. —
Ay! like unto hounds that are hungry,
They would seize me and tear me and torture.
They are following me, O most wretched,
They are hunting me down, people of God!
Help ye! Save me! The door, oh, shut it to!
The door! — They are maddened — will enter!
They will take me from here, — from your hearthstone —
(The deed even God cannot pardon!) —
From your hearthstone that blest is and sacred
(And aught else but that deed God pardons) —
And my soul is baptized, — I am Christian —
Oh! help! O for San Giovanni's sake, help me!
For Mary's sake, her of the seven dolors!
For the sake of my soul. — For your own soul!

[*She stays by the hearth, all the women gathering at the side opposite her.* VIENDA *close to her mother and godmother.* ALIGI *stands outside the circle un-*

moved, leaning on his crook. Suddenly ORNELLA *rushes to the door, closes it, and bars it. A somewhat inimical murmur arises from the circle of women*]

Ah! tell me your name, — how they call you, —
Your name, that wherever I wander,
Over mountains, in valleys I bless it,
You, who in pity are first here,
Though in years yours are least in the counting!

[*Overcome she lets herself drop on the hearth, bowed over upon herself with her head resting on her knees. The women are huddled together like frightened sheep.* ORNELLA *steps forward toward the stranger*]

ANNA. Who is this woman! Holy Virgin!

MARIA. And is this the right way to enter
The dwelling of God-fearing people?

MONICA. And Candia, you! What say you?

LA CINERELLA. Will you let the door stay bolted?

ANNA. Is the last to be born of your daughters,
The first to command in your household?

LA CATALANA. She will bring down upon you bad fortune,
The wandering she-dog, for certain!

FELAVIA. Did you mark how she entered that instant
While yet Cinerella was pouring
On Vienda her handful of wheat flour,
Ere Aligi had got his share fully?

[ORNELLA *goes a step nearer the wretched fugitive.* FAVETTA *leaves the circle and joins her*]

MONICA. How now! Are we, then, to remain here,
With our baskets still on our heads loaded?

MARIA. Sure it would be a terrible omen
To put down on the ground here our baskets
Before giving our offerings to them.

MARIA DI GIAVE. My daughter, may Saint Luke defend you!
Saint Mark and Saint Matthew attend you!
Grope for your scapulary round your neck hanging,
Hold it closely and offer your prayer.

[SPLENDORE, *too, comes forward and joins the sisters. The three girls stand before the fugitive, who is still prostrate, panting and trembling with fear*]

ORNELLA. You are over sore-pressed, sister,
And dusty and tired, you tremble.
Weep no more, since now you are safe here.
You are thirsty. Your drink is your tears.
Will you drink of our water and wine? Your face bathe?

[*She takes a small bowl, draws water from the earthen receptacle and pours wine into it*]

FAVETTA. Are you of the valleys or elsewhere?
Do you come from afar? And whither
Do you now bend your steps, O woman!
All desolate thus by the roadside!

SPLENDORE. Some malady ails you, unlucky one?
A vow then of penitence made you?
To the Incoronata were travelling?
May the Virgin answer your prayers!

[*The fugitive lifts her head slowly and cautiously, with her face still hidden in the mantle*]

ORNELLA [*offering the bowl*]. Will you drink, now, daughter of Jesus?

[*From outside a noise is heard as of bare feet shuffling in the yard and voices murmuring. The stranger, again stricken with fear, does not drink from the proffered bowl but places it on the hearth and retires trembling to the further corner of the chimney*]

THE UNKNOWN ONE. They are here, oh, they come! They are seeking
For me! They will seize me and take me.
For mercy's sake, answer not, speak not.
They will go if they think the house empty,
And do nothing evil; but if you
Are heard, if you speak or you answer
They will certainly know I have entered.
They will open the door, force it open.
With the heat and the wine they are frenzied,
Mad dogs! and here is but one man,
And many are they and all have their sickles,
Their scythes. — Oh! for dear pity's sake,
For the sake of these innocent maidens,
For your sake, dear daughter of kindness! You, women holy!

THE BAND OF REAPERS [*in chorus outside at the door*]. The dwelling of Lazaro! Surely

Into this house entered the woman.
— They have closed the door, they have barred it!
— Look out for her there in the stubble.
— Search well in the hay there, Gonzelvo.
— Hah! Hah! In the dwelling of Lazaro,
Right into the maw of the wolf. Hah! Hah!
— Oh! Candia della Leonessa!
Ho! all of you there! Are you dead?
[*They knock at the door*]
Oh! Candia della Leonessa!
Do you offer a shelter to harlots?
— Do you find that you need such temptation
To still the fain flesh of your husband?
— If the woman be there, I say, open!
Open the door, good folks, give her to us
And on a soft bed we will lay her.
— Bring her out to us! Bring her out to us,
For we only want to know her better.
To the hay-cock, the hay-cock, the hay-cock!
[*They knock and clamor.* ALIGI *moves toward the door*]
THE UNKNOWN ONE [*whispering imploringly*]. Young man, O young man, pray have mercy!
Oh, have mercy! Do not open!
Not for my sake, not mine, but for others,
Since they will not seize now on me only,
Since imbruted are they. You must hear it! —
In their voices? — How now the fiend holds them?
The bestial mad fiend of high noonday,
The sweltering dog-days' infection.
If they gain entry here, what can you do?
[*The greatest excitement prevails among the women, but they restrain themselves*]
LA CATALANA. Ye see now to what shame we all are submitted,
We women of peace here, for this woman,
She who dares not show her face to us!
ANNA. Open, Aligi, open the door there,
But wide enough to let her pass out.
Grip hold of her and toss her out there,
Then close and bar the entrance, giving praises
To Lord Jesus our salvation.
And perdition overtake all wretches!
[*The shepherd turns toward the woman, hesitating.* ORNELLA, *stepping forward, stops his way; making a sign of silence, she goes to the door*]
ORNELLA. Who is there? Who knocks at the door there?
VOICES OF THE REAPERS [*outside, all confusedly*].
— Silence there! Hush up! Hush — sh! Hush — sh!
— There is some one within who is speaking!
— O Candia della Leonessa,
Is it you who are speaking? Open! Open!
— We are the reapers here of Norca,
All the company are we of Cataldo.
ORNELLA. I am not Candia. For Candia is busied now.
Abroad is she since early morning.
A VOICE. And you? Say who are you then?
ORNELLA. I belong to Lazaro, Ornella,
My father is Lazaro di Roio.
But ye, say ye, why ye have come here?
A VOICE. Open, we but want to look inside there.
ORNELLA. Open, that I cannot. For my mother
Locked me in here with her kindred
Going out, for we are marrying.
The betrothal we are having of my brother,
Aligi, the shepherd, who is taking
To wife here, Vienda di Giave.
A VOICE. Did you then not let in a woman,
But a short while ago, a woman frightened?
ORNELLA. A woman? Then in peace go away.
Seek ye elsewhere to find her.
O reapers of Norca! I return to my loom here,
For each cast that is lost by my shuttle
Will be lost and can never be gathered.
God be with you to keep you from evil,
O ye reapers of Norca! May he give you
Strength for your work in the grain fields
Till by evening you reach the end of your labor,
And I, also, poor woman, the ending
Of the breadth of this cloth I am weaving.
[*Suddenly at the side window two muscular hands seize the iron bars and a brutal face peers in*]
THE REAPER [*shouting in a loud voice*].
Ho! Captain! the woman is in there!

She's inside! She's inside! The youngster
Was fooling us here, yes, the youngster!
The woman is in there! See, inside there,
In the corner. I see her, I see her!
And there too is the bride and the bridegroom,
And the kindred who brought them their presents.
This is the feast of the grain-pouring spousal.
Ah, ho! Captain! A fine lot of girls there!

CHORUS OF REAPERS [*outside*]. — If the woman's within, we say, open!
For you it is shame to protect her.
— Send her out here! Send her out here!
And we will give her some honey.
— Ho! open there, open, you, and give her to us.
— To the hay-cock with her, to the hay-cock.

[*They clamor and shout. The women inside are all confused and agitated. The* UNKNOWN ONE *keeps in the shadow, shrinking close to the wall, as if she sought to sink herself in it*]

CHORUS OF KINDRED. — Oh help us, O holy Virgin!
Is this what the vigil gives us,
The eve of Santo Giovanni?
— What disgrace is this you give us, — what sorrow
This that you give us, Beheaded one! —
Just to-day of all days.
— Candia, have you lost your reason?
— O Candia, have you lost your senses?
— Ornella, and all your sisters with you?
— She was always a bit of a madcap.
— Give her up to them, give her, give her
To these hungry, ravening wolves!

THE REAPER [*still holding the bars*].
Shepherd Aligi, oho! shepherd Aligi,
Will you give, at your feast of espousal,
A place to a sheep that is rotten, —
A sheep that is mangy and lousy?
Take care she infect not your sheepfold,
Or give to your wife her contagion.
O Candia della Leonessa,
Know you whom in your home there you harbor,
In your home there with your new-found daughter?
The daughter of Jorio, the daughter
Of the Sorcerer of Codra!
She-dog roamer o'er mountains and valleys,
A haunter of stables and straw-stacks,
Mila the shameless? Mila di Codra.
The woman of stables and straw-heaps,
Very well known of all companies;
And now it has come to be our turn, —
The turn of the reapers of Norca.
Send her out here, send her out here!
We must have her, have her, have her!

[ALIGI, *pale and trembling, advances toward the wretched woman, who remains persistently in the shadow; and pulling off her mantle, he uncovers her face*]

MILA DI CODRA. No! No! It is not true! A cruel lie!
A cruel lie! Do not believe him,
Do not believe what such a dog says!
It is but the cursèd wine speaking
And out of his mouth bubbling evil.
If God heard it, may He to poison
Turn his black words, and he drown in 't!
No! It is not true. A cruel lie!

[*The three sisters stop their ears while the reaper renews his vituperations*]

THE REAPER. You shameless one! you are common,
Well known are you as the ditches,
The field-grass to dry straw turning,
Under your body's sins burning,
Men for your body have gambled
And fought with pitchforks and sickles.
Only wait just a bit for your man, Candia,
And you'll see! He'll come back to you bandaged,
For sure! From a fight with Rainero,
A fight in the grain-field of Mispa, —
For whom but for Jorio's daughter?
And now you keep her in your home, here,
To give her to your man Lazaro,
To have him find her here all ready.
Aligi! Vienda di Giave!
Give up to her your bridal bedstead!
And all ye women, go and scatter wheat-grains, —
Upon her head the golden wheat-grains!
We'll come back ourselves here with music,
A little later and ask for the wine-jug.

[*The reaper jumps down and disappears mid an outbreak of coarse laughter from the others*]

CHORUS OF REAPERS [*outside*]. Hand us out the wine-jug. That's the custom.
— The wine-jug, the wine-jug, and the woman!

[ALIGI *stands rigid, with his eyes fixed upon the floor, perplexed, still holding in his hand the mantle he has taken*]

MILA. O innocence, O innocence, of all these
Young maidens here, you have heard not,
The filthiness, you have heard not,
Oh! Tell me you have heard not, heard not! —
At least not you, Ornella, oh, no, not
You who have wished to save me!

ANNA. Do not go near her, Ornella! Or would you
Have her ruin you? She, the daughter of the Sorcerer,
Must to every one bring ruin.

MILA. She comes to me because behind me
She sees here weeping the silent angel —
The guardian over my soul keeping vigil.

[ALIGI *turns quickly toward* MILA *at these words, and gazes at her fixedly*]

MARIA CORA. Oh! Oh! it is sacrilege! Sacrilege!

LA CINERELLA. Ha! She has blasphemed, she has blasphemed,
Against the heavenly angel.

FELAVIA. She will desecrate your hearthstone,
Candia, unless hence you chase her.

ANNA. Out with her, out, in good time, Aligi,
Seize her, and out to the dogs toss her!

LA CATALANA. Well I know you, Mila di Codra,
Well at Farne do they fear you,
And well I know your doings.
You brought death to Giovanna Cametra,
And death to the son of Panfilo.
You turned the head of poor Alfonso,
Gave Tillura the evil sickness,
Caused the death of your father, even,
Who now in damnation damns you!

MILA. May thou, God, protect his spirit
And unto peace his soul gather.
Ah! You it is who have blasphemed
Against a soul that is departed
And may your blaspheming speeches
Fall on you, whenever death fronts you!

[CANDIA, *seated on one of the chests, is sad and silent. Now she rises, passes through the restless circle of women, and advances toward the persecuted one, slowly, without anger*]

CHORUS OF REAPERS. Ahey! Ahey!
How long to wait?
Have you come to an agreement?
— Oh, I say, shepherd, ho! you shepherd,
For yourself, then, do you keep her?
— Candia, what if Lazaro come back now?
— Is she then unwilling? But open,
Open! A hand we will lend her.
And meanwhile give us the wine-jug,
The wine-jug, the wine-jug's the custom!

[*Another reaper peers in through the grating*]

THE REAPER. Mila di Codra, come out here!
For you that will be much the better.
To try to escape us is useless,
We'll seek now the oak-tree shady,
And throw dice for the one to have you,
That the chance for us all be equal,
Now, we will not quarrel for you,
As Lazaro did with Rainero,
No, we'll have no useless bloodshed.
But, now, if you don't come out here,
Ere the last one turns up his dice-box,
Then this door we all shall break open
And carry things here with a free hand.
You are warned now; best heed this your warning,
Candia della Leonessa!

[*He jumps down and the clamor is much abated. The ringing of the village church bells can be heard in the distance*]

CANDIA. Woman, hear me. Lo, I am the mother
Of these three innocent maidens,
Also of this youth, the bridegroom.
We were in peace in our home here,
In peace and in rest with God's favor,
And blessing with home rites the marriage,
You may see the wheat still in the baskets
And in the blest loaf the fresh flower!
You have entered in here and brought us
Suddenly conflict and sorrow,
Interrupted the kindred's giving,
In our hearts sowing thoughts of dark omen,
That have set my children weeping,
And my bowels yearn and weep with them.
All to chaff our good wheat grain is turning,
And a worse thing still may follow.
It is best for you to go now.
Go thou with God, knowing surely

He will help you, if you trust Him.
Oh! There is cause for all this our sorrow.
We would fain have desired your safety.
Yet now, turn your steps hence, swiftly,
So that none of this house need harm you.
The door, this my son will now open.
[*The victim listens in humility with bent head, pale and trembling.* ALIGI *steps toward the door and listens. His face shows great sorrow*]
MILA. Christian mother, lo! the earth here
I kiss where your feet have trodden,
And I ask of you forgiveness,
With my heart in my hand lying,
In the palm of my hand, grieving,
For this sorrow of my bringing.
But I did not seek your dwelling:
I was blinded, with fear blinded,
And the Father, He, all-seeing,
Led me here thus to your fireside,
So that I, the persecuted,
Might find mercy by your fireplace,
Mercy making this day sacred.
O have mercy! Christian mother.
O have mercy! and each wheat grain
Resting here within these hampers
God will return a hundred-fold.
LA CATALANA [*whispering*]. Listen not. Whoever listens
Will be lost. The false one is she.
Oh! I know! Her father gave her,
To make her voice so sweet and gentle,
Evil roots of secret magic.
ANNA. Just see now how Aligi's spellbound!
MARIA CORA. Beware! beware! lest she give him
Fatal illness. O Lord, save us!
Have you not heard what all the reapers
Have been saying about Lazaro?
MONICA. Shall we stay here then till vespers
With these baskets on our heads thus?
I shall put mine on the ground soon.
[CANDIA *gazes intently upon her son, who is fastened upon* MILA. *Suddenly fear and rage seize her, and she cries aloud*]
CANDIA. Begone, begone, you sorcerer's
Daughter! Go to the dogs! Begone!
In my house remain no longer!
Fling open the door, Aligi!
MILA. Mother of Ornella, — Love's own mother,
All, but not this, God forgiveth.
Trample on me, God forgiveth,
Cut off my hands, yet God forgiveth,
Gouge out my eyes, pluck my tongue out,
Tear me to shreds, yet God forgiveth,
Strangle me, yet God forgiveth,
But if you now (heed me, O heed me!
While the bells are ringing for Santo Giovanni),
If now you seize upon this body, —
This poor tortured flesh signed in Christ's name,
And toss it out there in that courtyard,
In sight of these your spotless daughters,
Abandoning it to sin of that rabble,
To hatred and to brutal lusting,
Then, O mother of Ornella,
Mother of innocence in so doing,
Doing that thing, God condemns you!
LA CATALANA. She was never christened, never,
Her father was never buried
In consecrated ground; under
A thorn-bush he lies. I swear it.
MILA. Demons are behind you, woman!
Black and foul and false your mouth is!
LA CATALANA. O Candia, hear her, hear her,
Curses heaping! But a little,
And she'll drive you from your dwelling,
And then all the reapers threatened
Will most surely fall upon us.
ANNA DI BOVA. Up, Aligi! Drag her out there!
MARIA CORA. See you not how your Vienda,
Your young bride, looks like one dying?
LA CINERELLA. What kind of a man are you? Forsaken
Thus of all force in your muscles?
Is the tongue within your mouth, then,
Dried and shrivelled that you speak not?
FELAVIA. You seem lost. How then? Did your senses
Go astray afar off in the mountain? —
Did you lose your wits down in the valley?
MONICA. Look! He hasn't let go of her mantle,
Since the time he took it from her.
To his fingers it seems rooted.
LA CATALANA. Do you think your son Aligi's
Mind is going? Heaven help us!
CANDIA. Aligi, Aligi! You hear me?
What ails you? Where are you? Gone are your senses?
What is coming to birth in your heart, son?

[*Taking the mantle out of his hand, she throws it to the woman*]
I myself will open the door; take her
And push her out of here straightway.
Aligi, to you I speak. You hear me?
Ah! verily you have been sleeping
For seven hundred hundred years,
And all of us are long forgotten.
Kindred! God wills my undoing.
I hoped these last days would bring solace
And that God would now give me repose,
That less bitterness now need I swallow;
But bitterness overpowers me.
My daughters! Take ye my black mantle
From out of the ancient chest there,
And cover my head and my sorrows,
Within my own soul be my wailing!

[*The son shakes his head, his face showing perplexity and sorrow, and he speaks as one in a dream*]

ALIGI. What is your will of me, mother?
Unto you said I: "Ah! lay there
Against both of the door-posts the ploughshare,
The wain and the oxen, put sods there and stones there,
Yea, the mountain with all of its snow-drifts."
What did I say then? And how answered you?
"Heed the waxen cross that is holy,
That was blest on the Day of Ascension,
And the hinges with holy water sprinkled."
Oh, what is your will that I do? It was night still
When she took the road that comes hither.
Profound, then, profound was my slumber,
O mother! although you had not mingled for me,
The wine with the seed of the poppy.
Now that slumber of Christ falls and fails me:
And though well I know whence this proceedeth,
My lips are yet stricken with dumbness.
O woman! what then is your bidding?
That I seize her here now by her tresses, —
That I drag her out there in the court-yard, —
That I toss her for these dogs to raven?
Well! So be it! So be it! — I do so.

[ALIGI *advances toward* MILA, *but she shrinks within the fireplace, clinging for refuge*]

MILA. Touch me not! Oh! you, you are sinning,
Against the old laws of the hearth-stone —
You are sinning the great sin that's mortal
Against your own blood and the sanction
Of your race, of your own ancient kin-folk.
Lo! over the stone of the fireplace
I pour out the wine that was given
To me by your sister, in blood bound;
So now if you touch me, molest me,
All the dead in your land, in your country,
All those of the long years forgotten,
Generation to past generation,
That lie underground eighty fathoms,
Will abhor you with horror eternal.

[*Taking the bowl of wine,* MILA *pours it over the inviolate hearth. The women utter fierce and frantic cries*]

THE CHORUS OF KINDRED. Oh, woe!
She bewitches — bewitches the fire-place!
— She poured with the wine there a mixture.
I saw it, I saw her. 'Twas stealthy!
— Oh, take her, oh, take her, Aligi,
And force her away from the hearth-stone.
— By the hair, oh, seize her, seize her!
— Aligi, fear you naught, fear nothing,
All her conjuring yet will be nothing.
— Take her away and shiver the wine-bowl!
Shiver it there against the andirons.
— Break the chain loose and engirdle
Her neck with it, three times twist it.
— She has surely bewitched the hearth-stone.
— Woe! Woe for the house that totters!
Ah! What lamenting will here be lamented!

THE CHORUS OF REAPERS. Oho there! All quarrelling, are you?
We are waiting here and we're watching.
We have cast the dice, we know the winner.
Bring her out to us, you shepherd!
Yes, yes! Or the door we'll break down.

[*They join in blows on the door and in clamoring*]

ANNA DI BOVA. Hold on! Hold on! and have patience a little,
But a little while longer, good menfolk.
Aligi is taking her. Soon you will have her.

[ALIGI, *like one demented, takes her by the wrists, but she resists and tries to free herself*]

MILA. No! No! You are sinning, are sinning.
Crush under your feet my forehead
Or stun it with blows of your sheep-hook,
And when I am dead toss me out there.
No, no! God's punishment on you!
From the womb of your wife serpents
To you shall be born and brought forth.
You shall sleep no more, no more,
And rest shall forsake your eyelids,
From your eyes tears of blood shall gush forth.
Ornella, Ornella, defend me,
Aid me, O thou, and have mercy!
Ye sisters in Christ, do thou help me!

[*She frees herself and goes to the three sisters, who surround her. Blind with rage and horror,* ALIGI *lifts his hook to strike her on the head. Immediately his three sisters begin to cry and moan. This stops him at once; he lets the hook fall on his knees and with open arms he stares behind her*]

ALIGI. Mercy of God! Oh, give me forgiveness!
I saw the angel, silent, weeping.
He is weeping with you, O my sisters!
And at me he is gazing and weeping.
Even thus shall I see him forever,
Till the hour for my passing, yea! past it.
I have sinned thus against my own hearthstone,
My own dead and the land of my fathers;
It will spurn me and scorn me forever,
Deny rest to my weary dead body!
For my sins, sisters, purification,
Seven times, seven times, I do ask it.
Seven days shall my lips touch the ashes,
And as many times more as the tears shed
From your gentle eyes, O my sisters!
Let the angel count them, my sisters,
And brand on my heart all their number!
It is thus that I ask you forgiveness.
Before God thus I ask you, my sisters,
Oh! pray you for brother Aligi,
Who must now return to the mountain.
And she who has suffered such shame here,
I pray you console her, refresh her
With drink, wipe the dust from her garments,
Bathe her feet with water and vinegar.
Comfort her! I wished not to harm her.
Spurred on was I by these voices.
And those who to this wrong have brought me
Shall suffer for many days greatly.
Mila di Codra! sister in Jesus,
O give me peace for my offences.
These flowerets of Santo Giovanni
Off from my sheep-hook now do I take them
And thus at your feet here I place them.
Look at you I cannot. I'm shamefaced.
Behind you I see the sad angel.
But this hand which did you offence here,
I burn in that fire with live embers.

[*Dragging himself on his knees to the fireplace, he bends over and finds a burning ember. Taking it with his left hand, he puts the point of it in the palm of the right*]

MILA. It is forgiven. No, no. Do not wound yourself.
For me, I forgive you, and God shall receive
Your penitent prayer. Rise up from the fireplace!
One only, God only may punish;
And He that hand hath given to you
To guide your flocks to the pasture.
And how then your sheep can you pasture
If your hand is infirm, O Aligi?
For me, in all humbleness, I forgive you,
And your name I shall ever remember,
Morn, eve, and midday shall my blessing
Follow you with your flocks in the mountains.

THE CHORUS OF REAPERS [*outside*].
— Oho, there! Oho, there! How now?
— What is the row? Do you fool us?
— Ho! We'll tear down the door there.
— Yes, yes! Take that timber, the plough-beam.
— Shepherd, we'll not have you fool us.
Now, now, that iron there, take it!
Down with it! Crash down the door there!
— Ho, shepherd Aligi! Now answer!
One, then! Two! Three, and down goes it!

[*The heavy breathing of the men lifting the timber and iron is heard*]

ALIGI. For you, for me, and for all my people,
I make the sign of the cross!
[*Rising and going toward the door, he continues*]
Reapers of Norca! This door I open.
[*The men answer in a unanimous clamor. The wind brings the sound of the bells.* ALIGI *draws the bars and bolts and silently crosses himself, then he takes down from the wall the cross of wax and kisses it*]
Women, God's servants, cross yourselves praying.
[*All the women cross themselves and kneeling murmur the litany*]
WOMEN [*together*]. Kyrie eleison!
Lord have mercy upon us!
Christe eleison!
Christ have mercy upon us!
Kyrie eleison!
Lord have mercy upon us!
Christe audi nos!
O Christ hear us!
Christe exaudi nos!
O Christ hearken unto us!
[*The shepherd then lays the cross on the threshold between the hoe and the distaff and opens the door. In the yard, glittering in the fierce sun, the linen-clad reapers appear*]
ALIGI. Brothers in Christ! Behold the cross
That was blest on the Day of Ascension!
I have placed it there on the threshold,
That you may not sin against this gentle
Lamb of Christ who here finds refuge,
Seeking safety in this fireplace.
[*The reapers, struck silent and deeply impressed, uncover their heads*]
I saw there standing behind her
The angel who guards her, silent,
These eyes that shall see life eternal
Saw her angel that stood there weeping.
Look, brothers in Christ, I swear it!
Turn back to your wheat-fields and reap them,
Harm you not one who has harmed you never!
Nor let the false enemy beguile you
Any longer with his potions.
Reapers of Norca, heaven bless you!
May the sheaves in your hands be doubled!
And may Santo Giovanni's head severed
Be shown unto you at the sunrise,
If, for this, to-night you ascend the hill Plaia.
And wish ye no harm unto me, the shepherd,
To me, Aligi, our Saviour's servant!
[*The kneeling women continue the litanies,* CANDIA *invoking, the others responding*]
CANDIA *and* CHORUS OF THE KINDRED.
Mater purissima,
Mother of Purity,
ora pro nobis.
pray for us.
Mater castissima,
Mother of Chastity,
ora pro nobis.
pray for us.
Mater inviolata,
Mother Inviolate,
ora pro nobis.
pray for us.
[*The reapers bow themselves, touch the cross with their hands and then touch their lips and silently withdraw toward the glittering fields outside,* ALIGI, *leaning against the jamb of the door, following with his eyes their departure, the silence meanwhile broken only by voices coming from the country pathways outside*]
FIRST VOICE. Oh! turn back, Lazaro di Roio.
ANOTHER VOICE. Turn back, turn back, Lazaro!
[*The shepherd, startled and shading his face with his hands, looks toward the path*]
CANDIA *and the* WOMEN. Virgo veneranda,
Virgin venerated,
Virgo predicanda,
Virgin admonishing,
Virgo potens,
Virgin potential,
ora pro nobis.
pray for us.
ALIGI. Father, father, what is this? Why are you bandaged?
Why are you bleeding, father? Speak out and tell me,
O ye men of the Lord! Who wounded him?

[LAZARO *appears at the door with his head bandaged, two men in white linen supporting him.* CANDIA *stops praying, rises to her feet and goes to the entrance*]

ALIGI. Father, halt there! The cross lies there on the door-sill,

You cannot pass through without kneeling down.
If this blood be unjust blood you cannot pass through.

[*The two men sustain the tottering man and he falls guiltily on his knees outside the doorway*]

CANDIA. O daughters, my daughters, 'twas true then!
Oh, weep, my daughters! let mourning enfold us!

[*The daughters embrace their mother. The kindred before rising put their hampers down on the ground.* MILA *takes up her mantle and still kneeling wraps herself up in it, hiding her face. Almost creeping, she approaches the door toward the jamb opposite that where* ALIGI *leans. Silently and swiftly she rises and leans against the wall, and stands there wrapt and motionless, watching her chance to disappear*]

ACT II

A mountain cavern is seen partially protected by rough boards, straw, and twigs and opening wide upon a stony mountain path. From the wide opening are seen green pastures, snow-clad peaks, and passing clouds. In the cavern are pallets made of sheep-pelts, small, rude wooden tables, pouches and skins, filled and empty, a rude bench for wood turning and carving, with an axe upon it, a draw-knife, plane, rasps, and other tools, and near them finished pieces; distaffs, spoons and ladles, mortars and pestles, musical instruments, and candlesticks. A large block of the trunk of a walnut tree has at its base the bark, and above, in full relief, the figure of an angel hewn into shape to the waist, with the two wings almost finished. Before the image of the Virgin, in a depression of the cavern like a niche, a lamp is burning. A shepherd's bagpipe hangs close by. The bells of the sheep wandering in the stillness of the mountain may be heard. The day is closing and it is about the time of the autumnal equinox.

The treasure-seeker, MALDE, *and* ANNA ONNA, *the old herb-gatherer, are lying asleep on the pelts, in their rags.* COSMA, *the saint, dressed in a long friar's frock, is also asleep, but in a sitting posture, with his arms clasped about his knees and his chin bowed over on them.* ALIGI *is seated on a little bench, intent upon carving with his tools the walnut block.* MILA DI CODRA *is seated opposite, gazing at him.*

MILA. Bided mute the patron angel
From the walnut woodblock carven,
Deaf the wood stayed, secret, sacred,
Saint Onofrio vouchsafed nothing.

Till said one apart, a third one,
(Oh, have pity on us, Patron!)
Till said one apart, the fair one,
Lo! my heart all willing, waiting!

Would he quaff a draught of marvel?
Let him take my heart's blood, quaff it!
But of this make no avowal,
But of this make no revealing.

Suddenly the stump budded branches,
Out of the mouth a branch sprang budding,
Every finger budded branches,
Saint Onofrio all grew green again!

[*She bends over to gather the chips and shavings around the carved block*]

ALIGI. O Mila, this too is hewn from the stump of a walnut,
Grow green will it, Mila? — Grow green again?

MILA [*still bent over*]. "Would he quaff a draught of marvel
Let him take my heart's blood." —

ALIGI. Grow green will it, Mila? — Grow green again?

MILA. "But of this make no avowal,
But of this make no revealing."

ALIGI. Mila, Mila, let a miracle now absolve us!
And may the mute patron angel grant us protection.
'T is for him that I work, but not with my chisel,
Ah! for him do I work with my soul in my fingers!
But what are you seeking? What have you lost there?

MILA. I but gather the shavings, that in fire we burn them
With each a grain of pure incense being added.
Make haste, then, Aligi, for the time is nearing.
The moonlight of September fleeting, lessening;

All of the shepherds now are leaving, departing,
Some on to Puglia fare, some Romeward faring; —
And whither then will my love his footsteps be turning?
Wherever he journeys still may his pathway
Go facing fresh pastures and springs, not winds keen and chilling,
And of me may he think when the night overtakes him!

ALIGI. Romeward faring then shall go Aligi,
Onward to Rome whither all roads are leading,
His flock along with him to lofty Rome,
To beg an indulgence of the Vicar,
Of the Holy Vicar of Christ our Saviour,
For he of all shepherds is the Shepherd.
Not to Puglia land will go Aligi,
But to our blest Lady of Schiavonia,
Sending to her by Alai of Averna
These two candlesticks of cypress wood, only,
And with them merely two humble tapers,
So she forget not a lowly sinner
She, our Lady, who guardeth the seashore.
Then when this angel shall be all finished,
Aligi upon a mule's back will load it,
And step by step will he wend on with it.

MILA. Oh, hasten, oh, hasten! for the time is ripening.
From the girdle downward very nearly
Sunk in the wood yet and lost is the angel;
The feet are held fast in the knots, the hands without fingers,
The eyes with the forehead still level.
You hastened indeed his wings to give him,
Feather by feather, yet forth he flies not!

ALIGI. Gostanzo will aid me in this, the painter,
Gostanzo di Bisegna; the painter is he
Who tells stories on wood in color.
Unto him I have spoken already,
And he will give unto me fine colors.
Perhaps, too, the good monks at the abbey,
For a yearling, a little fine gold leaf
For the wings and the bosom will give me.

MILA. Oh, hasten! Hasten! The time is rip'ning,
Longer than day is the night already,
From the valley the shades rise more quickly,
And unawares they shut down around us.
Soon the eye will guide the hand no longer,
And unsuccored of art will grope the blind chisel!

[COSMA *stirs in his sleep and moans. From a distance the sacred songs of pilgrims crossing the mountain are heard*]

Cosma is dreaming. Who knows what he's dreaming!
Listen, listen, the songs of the pilgrims
Who across the mountain go journeying,
May be to Santa Maria della Potenza,
Aligi, — toward your own country, — toward
Your own home, where your mother is sitting.
And may be they will pass by very near,
And your mother will hear, and Ornella,
Mayhap, and they'll say: "These must be pilgrims
Coming down from the place of the shepherds;
And yet no loving token is sent us!"

[ALIGI *is bending over his work carving the lower part of the block. Giving a blow with the axe he leaves the iron in the wood and comes forward anxiously*]

ALIGI. Ah! Why, why will you touch where the heart is hurting?
Oh! Mila, I will speed on, overtake their cross-bearer
And beg him bear onward my loving thoughts with them.
And yet, Mila, yet — Oh! how shall I say it, Mila?

MILA. You will say: "O good cross-bearer, I prithee,
If ye cross through the valley of San Biagio,
Through the countryside called Acquanova,
Ask ye there for the house of a woman
Who is known as Candia della Leonessa,
And stay ye your steps there, for there most surely
Drink shall ye have to restore you, and may be
Much beside given. Then stay there and say ye:
'Aligi, your son, sends unto you greeting,
And to his sisters, and also the bride, Vienda,
And he promises he will be coming
To receive from your hands soon your blessing
Ere in peace he depart on long travels.
And he says, too, that he is set free now,

From her — the evil one — during these late days;
And he will be cause of dissension no longer,
And he will be cause of lamenting no longer,
To the mother, the bride, and the sisters.'"

ALIGI. Mila, Mila, what ill wind strikes you
And stirs up your soul in you thus? — A wind sudden,
A wind full of fearing! And on your lips dying,
Your voice is; your blood your cheek is draining.
And wherefore, tell me, should I be sending
This message of falsehood to my mother?

MILA. It is the truth, it is the truth, I tell you,
O brother mine and dear to the sister,
It is true what I say; as true is it
That I have remained by you untainted,
Like a sacred lamp before your faith burning,
With immaculate love before you shining.
It is the truth, it is the truth I tell you.
And I say: Go, go, speed ye on your pathway
And meet ye the cross-bearer so that he carry
Your greetings of peace on to Acquanova.
Now come is the hour of departure
For the daughter of Jorio. And let it be so.

ALIGI. Yea, verily, you have partaken of honey, wild honey
That your mind is thus troubled!
And you would go whither? Oh, whither, Mila?

MILA. Pass on thither where all roads are leading.

ALIGI. Ah! Will you come then with me? Oh, come with me!
Though full long the journey, you also, Mila,
Will I place on the mule's back and travel,
Cherishing hope, toward Rome the eternal!

MILA. Needs be that I go the opposite way,
With steps hurried, bereft of all hoping.

ALIGI [*turning impatiently to the sleeping old herb-woman*].
Anna Onna! Up, arouse you! Go and find me
Grains of black hellebore, hellebore ebon,
To give back to this woman her senses.

MILA. Oh, be not angry, Aligi, for if you are angry —
For if you are also against me, how shall I live through
This day till the evening? For behold, if you trample
My heart beneath you, I shall gather it never again!

ALIGI. And I to my home shall be turning never again,
If not with you, O daughter of Jorio,
Mila di Codra, my own by the Sacrament!

MILA. Aligi, can I cross the very threshold
Whereon once the waxen cross was lying,
Where a man once appeared who was bloody?
And unto whom said the son of this man:
"If this blood be unjust blood you cannot pass through"?
High noonday 't was then, the eve of the day
Of Santo Giovanni, and harvest day.
Now in peace on that wall hangs the idle sickle;
Now at rest lies the grain in the granary;
But of that sorrow's sowing the seeds are still growing.

[COSMA *moves in his sleep and moans*]

ALIGI. Know you, then, one who shall lead you by the hand thither!

COSMA [*crying out in his sleep*]. Oh, do not unbind him! No, no, do not unbind him!

[*The saint, stretching his arms, lifts up his face from his knees*]

MILA. Cosma, Cosma, what are you dreaming? Tell your dreaming!

[COSMA *wakens and rises*]

ALIGI. What have you been seeing? Tell your seeing!

COSMA. The face of Fear was turned full upon me.
I have beheld it. But I may not tell it.
Every dream that cometh of God must be chastened
From the fire of it first before giving.
I have beheld it. And I shall speak, surely.
Yet not now, lest I speak the name vainly
Of my Lord and my God, lest I judge now
While my darkness is still overpowering.

ALIGI. O Cosma, thou art holy. Many a year

Have you bathed in the melting snow water,
In the water o'erflowing the mountain,
Quenching your thirst in the clear sight of Heaven,
And this day you have slept in my cavern,
On the sheep-skin that's steamed well in sulphur
So the spirit of evil must shun it.
In your dreaming now you have seen visions,
And the eye of the Lord God is on you.
Help me then with your sure divination!
Now to you I shall speak. You will answer.

COSMA. All unready am I in wisdom,
Nor have I, O youth, understanding
Of so much as the stone in the path of the shepherd.

ALIGI. O Cosma, man of God, heed me and listen!
I implore by the angel in that block enfolded,
Who has no ears to hear and yet heareth!

COSMA. Simple words speak ye, O shepherd,
And repose not your trust in me,
But in the holy truth only.

[MALDE *and* ANNA ONNA *awaken and lean upon their elbows listening*]

ALIGI. Cosma, this, then, is the holy truth:
I turned from the mountain and Puglia valley
With my flock on the day Corpus Domini,
And after I found for my flock good shelter
I went to my home for my three days' resting.
And I find there in my house my mother
Who says unto me: "Son of mine, a companion
For you have I found." Then say I: "Mother,
I ever obey your commandments." She answered:
"'T is well. And lo! here is the woman."
We were espoused. And the kindred gathered,
Escorting the bride to our threshold.
Aloof I stood like a man on the other
Bank of a river, seeing all things as yonder,
Afar, past the water flowing between,
The water that flows everlastingly.
Cosma, this was on a Sunday. And mingled
With my wine was no seed of the poppy.
Why then, notwithstanding, did slumber profound
My heart all forgetting o'erpower?
I believe I slept years seven hundred.
We awoke on the Monday belated.
Then the loaf of the Bridal my mother
Broke over the head of a weeping virgin.
Untouched had she lain by me. The kindred
Came then with their wheat in their hampers.
But mute stayed I wrapped up in great sadness.
As one in the shadow of death I was dwelling.
Behold now! on a sudden, all trembling,
There appeared in our doorway this woman,
Hard pursuing and pressing her, reapers,—
Hounds! that wanted to seize her and have her.
Then implored she and pleaded for safety.
But not even one of us, Cosma,
Moved, except one, my sister, the littlest,
Who dared rush to the door and bar it.
And lo, now by those dogs was it shaken,
With uttering of curses and threat'ning.
And in hatred against this sad creature
Were their foul mouths unleashed and barking.
To the pack would the women have tossed her,
But she trembling still by the hearth-stone,
Was pleading us not to make sacrifice of her.
I, too, myself, seized her with hatred and threat'ning,
Though it seemed to me, then, I was dragging
At my own very heart, the heart of my childhood.
She cried out, and above her head I lifted
My sheep-hook to strike her.
Then wept my sisters!
Then behind her beheld I the angel weeping!
With these eyes, O saint, the angel watching and weeping mutely.
Down on my knees fell I,
Imploring forgiveness. And then to punish
This, my hand, I took up from the fire-place
A burning ember.
"No, do not burn it,"

She cried aloud, — this woman cried to me.
— O Cosma! saint holy, with waters from snow-peaks
Purified are you, dawning by dawning;
You, too, woman, who know all herbs growing
For the healing of flesh that is mortal,
Yea, all virtue of roots that are secret;
— Malde, you, too, with that branch of yours forking
May fathom where treasure is hidden,
Entombed at the feet of the dead now dead
For a hundred years, or a thousand — true is it? —
In the depths of the depths of the heart of the mountain.
Of ye then, I ask, of ye who can hear
The deep things within that come from afar,
Whence came that voice, — Oh, from what far distance
That came and that spake so Aligi should hear it?
(Oh, answer ye me!) — When she said unto me:
"And how then your flocks can you pasture
If your hand is infirm, O Aligi?"
Ah! with these her words did she gather
My soul from my body within me,
Even as you, O woman, gather your simples!

[Mila *weeps silently*]

Anna Onna. There's an herb that is red and called Glaspi,
And another is white called Egusa,
And the one and the other grow up far apart,
But their roots grope together and meet
Underneath the blind earth, and entwine
So closely that sever them never could ever
Santa Lucia. Their leaves are diverse,
But one and the same is their seven years' flower.
But all this is their record in records.
It is Cosma who knoweth the power of the Lord.

Aligi. Heed me then, Cosma! The slumber of forgetfulness
Was by Commandment sent to my pillow.
By whom? Closed by the hand of Innocence
Was the door of Safety. Came to me the apparition —
The Angel of Counsel. And out of the word
Of her mouth was created the pledge eternal.
Who then was my wife, before ever
Good wheat, holy loaf, or fair flower?

Cosma. O shepherd Aligi! God's are the just steel-yards of Justice.
God's only is the just balance of Justice.
Notwithstanding, oh, take ye counsel,
From the Angel of Counsel, who gave you your surety.
Yea, take pledge of him for this stranger.
But she left untouched, where is she?

Aligi. For the sheepstead I left after vespers,
On the eve of Santo Giovanni.
At daybreak
I found myself wending above Capracinta.
On the crest I awaited the sunrise,
And I saw in the disc of its blazing
The bleeding head that was severed.
To my sheepfold
Then came I, — and again I began — guarding my sheep — to suffer
For me seemed that sleep still overwhelmed me,
And my flock on my life's force was browsing.
Oh! why still was my heart heavy laden?
O Cosma! first saw I the shadow,
Then the figure, there, there, at the entrance,
On the morning of San Teobaldo.
On the rock out there was sitting this woman,
And she did not arise for she could not,
So sore were her feet and bleeding.
Said she: "Aligi,
Do you know me?"
I answered: "Thou art Mila."
And no word more we spoke, for no more were we
Twain. Nor on that day were contaminated
Nor after, ever.
I speak but the truth.

Cosma. O shepherd Aligi! You have verily lighted
A holy lamp in your darkness.
Yet it is not enkindled in limits appointed,
Chosen out of old time by your fathers.
You have moved farther off the Term Sacred.
How then if the lamp were spent and were quenched?
For wisdom is in man's heart a well-spring
Profound; but only the pure man may draw of its waters.

ALIGI. Now pray I great God that
He place upon us
The seal of the Sacrament eternal!
See ye this that I do? Not hand but
soul
Is carving this wood in the similitude
Of the Angel apparition. I began
On the Day of Assumption. Rosary
time
Shall it be finished. This my design is:
On to Rome with my flock I shall
wander,
And along with me carry my Angel,
On mule-back laden. I will go to the
Holy Father,
In the name of San Pietro Celestino,
Who upon Mount Morrone did penance.
I shall go to the Shepherd of shepherds,
With this votive offering, humbly im-
ploring
Indulgence, that the bride, yet un-
touched, may return
To her mother, set free thus and blame-
less;
Then as mine I may cherish this
stranger,
Who knows well how to weep all un-
heeded.
So now I ask this of your deep-reaching
wisdom,
Cosma: will this grace unto me be
conceded?

COSMA. All the ways of mankind
appear the direct ways
To man: but the Lord God is weighing
heart-secrets.
High the walls, high the walls of man's
stronghold,
Huge are its portals of iron; and around
and around it
Heavy the shade of tombs where grass
grows pallid.
Let not your lamb browse upon that
grass grown pallid,
O shepherd Aligi, best question the
mother.

A VOICE [*calling outside*]. Cosma,
Cosma! If you are within, come
forth!

COSMA. Who is calling for me? Did
you hear a voice calling?

THE VOICE. Come forth, Cosma, by
the blood that is holy!
O Christian brothers, the sign of the
cross make ye!

COSMA. Behold me. Who calls me?
Who wants me?

[*At the mouth of the cavern* TWO SHEP-
HERDS *appear, wearing sheep-skin
coats, holding a gaunt and sickly youth
whose arms are bound to his body
with several turns of a rope*]

FIRST SHEPHERD. O Christian broth-
ers! The sign of the cross make
ye!
May the Lord from the enemy keep
you!
And to guard well the door say a prayer.

SECOND SHEPHERD. O Cosma, this
youth is possessed of a demon.
Now for three days the devil has held
him.
Behold, oh, behold how he tortures him
now.
He froths at the mouth, turning livid
and shrieking.
With strong ropes we needed to tie and
bind him
To bring him to you. You who freed
before now
Bartolomeo dei Cionco ala Petrara, do
you,
O wise man of mercy, do you this one
also
Liberate! Force now the demon to
leave him!
Oh, chase him away from him, cure him
and heal him!

COSMA. What is his name and the
name of his father?

FIRST SHEPHERD. Salvestro, di
Mattia di Simeone.

COSMA. Salvestro, how then, you
will to be healed?
Be of good heart, my son, oh, be trustful!
Lo! I say unto you, fear not!
And ye,
Wherefore have ye bound him? Let
him be free!

SECOND SHEPHERD. Come with us
then to the chapel, Cosma.
There we can let him be free. He would
flee away, here.
He is frantic always, for escape ever
ready.
And sudden to take it. He's frothing.
Come on then!

COSMA. That will I, God helping.
Be of good heart, my son!

[*The* TWO SHEPHERDS *carry the
youth off.* MALDE *and* ANNA
ONNA *follow them for awhile,
then halt, gazing after them,* MALDE
*with a forked olive
branch with a small ball of
wax stuck on at the larger end,
the old woman leaning on her
crutch and with her bag of
simples hanging in front. Fi-
nally they also disappear from*

sight. The saint from the doorway turns back toward his host]

Cosma. I go in God's peace, shepherd Aligi.
For the comfort I found in your cavern,
May you be blessèd! Lo! now they called unto me
And therefore I answered. Before you may enter
Upon your new way, the old laws well consider.
Who will change the old ways shall be winnowed.
See ye guard well your father's commandment.
See ye heed well your mother's instruction.
Hold them ever steadfast in your bosom.
And God guide your feet, that you may not be taken
In lariats nor into live embers stumble!

Aligi. Cosma, quite well have you heard me? That I remain sinless.
Never I tainted myself but kept good faith,
Quite well have you heard of the sign God Almighty
Has revealed me and sent here unto me?
I await what will come, my flesh mortifying.

Cosma. I say unto you: Best question your parents
Ere you lead to your roof-tree this stranger.

A Voice [*calling from outside*]. Cosma, don't delay longer! Surely 't will kill him.

Cosma [*turning to* Mila]. Peace unto you, woman! If good be within you
Let it pour forth from you like tears falling
Without being heard. I may soon return.

Aligi. I come. I follow. Not all have I told you.

Mila. Aligi, 't is true: not all are you telling!
Go to the roadside. The cross-bearer watch for
And implore him to carry the message.

[*The saint goes off over the pasture land. The singing of the pilgrims is heard from time to time*]

Mila. Aligi, Aligi: not all did we tell!
Yet better it were that my mouth were choked up,
Better that stones and that ashes
Held me speechless. Hear then this only
From me, Aligi. I have done you no evil;
And none shall I do you. Healed and restored now
Are my feet. And I know well the pathways.
Now arrived is the hour of departure
For the daughter of Jorio. Now then so be it!

Aligi. I know not, you know not what hour may be coming.
Replenish the oil in our lamp of the Virgin,
Take the oil from the skin. Some yet is within,
And wait for me here. I seek the cross-bearer,
Right well what to say unto him know I.

Mila. Aligi, brother of mine! Give me your hand, now!

Aligi. Mila, the road is but there, not far away.

Mila. Give me that hand of yours, so I may kiss it.
'T is the drop that I yield to my thirst.

Aligi [*coming closer*]. With the ember I wanted to burn it, Mila,
This sinful hand that sought to offend you.

Mila. All that I forget. I am only the woman
You found on the rock there seated,
By who knows what roads coming hither!

Aligi [*coming again close*]. Upon your face your tears are not drying,
Dear woman. A tear is now staying
On the eyelashes, while you speak trembles, and falls not.

Mila. Over us hovers deep stillness. Aligi, just listen!
Hushed is the singing. With the grasses and snow-peaks
We are alone, brother mine, we are alone.

Aligi. Mila, now you are unto me as you first were
Out there on the rock, when you were all smiling,
With your eyes all shining, your feet all bleeding.

Mila. And you, — you, — are you not now the one who was kneeling, —
Who the flowrets of Santo Giovanni
Put down on the ground? Ah! by one were they gathered
Who bears them yet, wears them yet — in her scapulary.

Aligi. Mila, there is in your voice a vibration
That while it consoles me, it saddens.

As even October, when, all my flocks with me,
I border the bordering stretches of seashore.

MILA. To border them with you, the shore and the mountain,
Ah! I would that that fate were my fate evermore.

ALIGI. O my love, be preparing for such wayfaring!
Though the road there be long, for that is Love strong.

MILA. Aligi, I'd pass there through fires ever flaming,
Onward still wending by roads never ending.

ALIGI. To cull on the hill-top the blue gentian lonely,
On the seashore only the star-fish flower.

MILA. There on my knees would I drag myself on,
Placing them down on the tracks you were marking.

ALIGI. Think, too, of the places to rest when the night should o'ertake us,
And the mint and the thyme that would be your pillows.

MILA. I cannot think. No. Yet give leave this one night more
That I live with you, here, where you are here breathing,
That I hear you asleep and be with you,
And over you keep, like your dogs, faithful vigil!

ALIGI. Oh, you know, oh, you know what must await us.
How with you must I ever divide the bread, salt, and water.
And so shall I share with you also the pallet,
Unto death and eternity. Give me your hands!

[They grasp each other's hands, gazing into each other's eyes]

MILA. Ah! we tremble, we tremble. You are frigid,
Aligi. You are blanching. Oh, whither
Is flowing the blood your face loses?

[She frees herself and touches his face with both hands]

ALIGI. O Mila, Mila, I hear a great thundering,
All the mountain is shaking and sinking.
Where are you? Where are you? All is veiled.

[He stretches out his hand toward her as one tottering. They kiss each other. They fall down upon their knees, facing each other]

MILA. Have mercy upon us, blessed Virgin!

ALIGI. Have mercy upon us, O Christ Jesus!

[A deep silence follows]

A VOICE *[outside]*. Shepherd, ho! You are wanted, and in a hurry.
A black sheep has broken his shank.

[ALIGI *rises totteringly and goes toward the entrance*]

You are wanted at once and must hurry,
And there is a woman I know not.
On her head is a basket. For you she is asking.

[ALIGI *turns his head and looks toward* MILA *with an all-embracing glance. She is still on her knees*]

ALIGI *[in a whisper]*. Mila, replenish the oil in our lamp of the Virgin,
So it go not out. See, it barely is burning.
Take the oil from the skin. Some yet is within.
And await me. I only must go to the sheep-fold.
Fear nothing, for God is forgiving.
Because we trembled will Mary forgive us.
Replenish the oil and pray her for mercy.

[He goes out into the fields]

MILA. O Holy Virgin! Grant me this mercy:
That I may stay here with my face to earth bowed,
Cold here, that I may be found dead here,
That I may be removed hence for burial.
No trespass there was in thine eyesight.
No trespass there was. For Thou unto us wert indulgent.
The lips did no trespass. (To bear witness
There wert Thou!) The lips did no trespass.
So under Thine eyes I may die here, die here!
For strength have I none to leave here, O Mother!
Yet remain with him here Mila cannot!
Mother clement! I was never sinful,
But a well-spring tramped on and trodden.
Shamed have I been in the eyes of Heaven,
But who took away from my memory
This shame of mine if not Thou, Mary?
Born anew then was I when love was born in me.
Thou it was willed it, O faithful Virgin!

All the veins of this new blood spring from afar,
Spring from far off, from the far, far away,
From the depths of the earth where she rests,
She who nourished me once in days long ago, long ago.
Let it also be she who bears now for me witness
Of innocency! Madonna, Thou also bore witness!
The lips did no trespass here now (Thou wert witness),
No, there was none in the lips, no, in the lips there was none.
And if I trembled, oh, let me bear that trespass,
Bear ever that tremor with me beyond!
Here I close up within me my eyes with my fingers.

[*With the index and middle finger of each hand she presses her eyes, bowing her head to the earth*]

Death do I feel. Now do I feel it draw closer.
The tremor increaseth. Yet not the heart ceaseth.

[*Rising impetuously*]

Ah, wretch that I am, that which was told me
To do, I did not, though thrice did he say it:
"Replenish the oil." And lo! now 't is dying!

[*She goes toward the oil-skin hanging from a beam, with her eye still watching the dying flame, endeavoring to keep it alive with the murmured prayer:*]

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
(Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord be with thee.)

[*Opening the skin, it flattens in her hands. She searches for the flask to draw off the oil, but is able to get but one or two drops*]

'Tis empty! 'Tis empty! But three drops, Virgin,
For my unction extreme prithee be given me,
But two for my hands, for my lips the other,
And all for my soul, all the three!
For how can I live when back he returns here,
What can I say, Mother, what can I say?
Surely then he will see, or ere he see me,
How the lamp has gone out. If my loving
Sufficed not to keep the flame burning,
How pale unto him will this love of mine, Mother, appear!

[*Again she tries the skin, looking again for other receptacles, upsetting everything and still murmuring prayers*]

Cause it to burn, O Mother intrepid!
But a little while longer, as much longer only
As an Ave Maria, a Salve
Regina, O Mother of Mercy, of Pity!

[*In the frenzy of her search she goes to the entrance and hears a step and catches sight of a shadow. She calls aloud*]

O woman, good woman, Christian sister,
Come you hither! and may the Lord bless you!
Come you hither! For mayhap the Lord sends you.
What bear you in your basket? If a little
Oil, oh, then of your charity, give me a little!
Pray enter and take of all these your free choice,
These ladles, spindles, mortars, distaffs, any!
For need that there is here for Our Lady,
To replenish the oil in her lamp there hanging
And not to quench it; if through me it be quenched,
I shall lose sight of the way to Heaven.
Christian woman, grasp you my meaning?
Will you to me do this loving kindness?

[*The woman appears at the entrance, her head and face covered with a black mantle. She takes down the basket from her head without a word and placing it on the ground removes the cloth, takes out the phial of oil and offers it to* Mila]

Mila. Ah! be thou blessèd, be thou blessèd! Lord God
Reward thee on earth, and in Heaven also!
You have some! You have some! In mourning are you;
But the Madonna will grant it to you
To see again the face of your lost one, —
All for this deed of your charity done me.

[*She takes the phial and turns anxiously to go to the dying lamp*]

Ah! perdition upon me! 'Tis quenched.
[*The phial falls from her hand and breaks. For a few seconds she remains motionless, stunned with the terrible omen. The woman leaning down to the spilled oil touches it with her fingers and crosses herself.* MILA *regards the woman with utter sadness and the resignation of despair makes her voice hollow and slow*]
MILA. Pardon me, pardon, Christian pilgrim,
This your charity turned to nothing.
The oil wasted, broken in pieces the phial,
Misfortune upon me befallen.
Tell me what choose you? All these things here
Were fashioned out thus by the shepherd.
A new distaff and with it a spindle
Wish you? Or wish you a mortar and pestle?
Tell me, I pray. For nothing know I any more.
I am one of the lost in the earth beneath.
THE CLOAKED ONE. Daughter of Jorio! I have come unto you,
To you, bringing here, thus, this basket,
So I a boon may beseech of you.
MILA. Ah! heavenly voice that I ever
In the deeps of my soul have been hearing!
THE CLOAKED ONE. To you come I from Acquanova.
MILA. Ornella, Ornella art thou!
[ORNELLA *uncovers her face*]
ORNELLA. The sister am I of Aligi;
The daughter am I of Lazaro.
MILA. I kiss your two feet with humility,
That have carried you here to me
So that again your dear face I behold
This hour, this last hour of my mortal suffering.
To give me pity you were the first one,
You are now, too, the last one, Ornella!
ORNELLA. If I was the first, penitence
Great I have suffered. I am telling
The truth to you, Mila di Codra.
And still is my suffering bitter.
MILA. Oh! your voice in its sweetness is quivering.
In the wound doth the knife that hurts quiver.
And much more, ah! more doth it quiver
And you do not yet know that, Ornella!
ORNELLA. If only you knew this my sorrow!
If only you knew how much sadness
The small kindness I did for you caused me!
From my home that is left desolated
I come, where we weep and are perishing.
MILA. Why thus are you vested in mourning?
Who is dead then? You do not answer.
Mayhap — mayhap — the newly come sister?
ORNELLA. Ah! She is the one you wish perished!
MILA. No, no. God is my witness. I feared it,
And the fear of it seized me within me.
Tell me, tell me. Who is it? Answer,
For God's sake and for your own soul's sake!
ORNELLA. Not one of us yet has been taken;
But all of us there are still mourning
The dear one who leaves us abandoned,
And gives himself up to his ruin.
If you could behold the forsaken one,
If our mother you could but behold,
You would quiver indeed. Unto us
Come is the summer of blackness, come is
The Autumn bitter, oppressive,
And never a circling twelvemonth's season
Could be unto us so saddening. Surely,
When I shut to the door to help you and save you,
And gave myself up to my ruin,
You did not then seem to me so unfeeling, —
You who implored for compassion's sake, —
You who sought my name of me
That you might in your blessings whisper it!
But since then my name is shadowed in shame.
Every night, every day in our household,
I am railed upon, shunned, cast away.
They single me out. They, pointing, cry out:
"Lo! that is the one, behold her,
Who put up the bars of the entrance
So that evil within might stay safely
And hide at its ease by the hearthstone."
I cannot stay longer. Thus say I:
"Far rather
Hew at me, all, with your knife-blades
And carve me to shreds and cut me!"
This now
Is your blessing, Mila di Codra!
MILA. It is just, it is just that you

Strike me thus! Just is it that you
Make my lips drink thus deep of this bitterness!
With such sorrow be accompanied
All these my sins to the world that's beyond!
Mayhap, mayhap, then, the stones and the heather
And the stubble, the woodblock dumb, unfeeling,
Shall speak for me — the angel here silent,
That your brother is calling to life in the block there,
And the Virgin bereft of her lamplight.
These shall all speak for me: but I — I — shall speak not!

ORNELLA. Dear woman, indeed how around you
Your soul is your body's vestment,
And how I may touch it, outstretching
Towards you thus my hand with all faith.
How then did you do so much evil
To harm us so much — us — God's people?
If you could behold our Vienda,
Quiver, indeed, would you. For shortly the skin will
Over the bones part in twain for its dryness,
And the lips of her mouth are grown whiter
Than within her white mouth her white teeth are;
So that when the first rain came falling,
Saturday, Mamma, seeing her, said of her,
Weeping: "Lo, now! Lo, now! she will be leaving,
She will break with the moisture and vanish."
Yet my father laments not; his bitterness
He chews upon hard without weeping.
Envenomed within him the iron,
The wound in his flesh is like poison,
(San Cresidio and San Rocca guard us!)
The swelling leaves only the mouth free
To bark at us daily and nightly.
In his frenzy his curses were fearful, —
The roof of the house with them shaking,
And with them our hearts quaking.
Dear woman,
Your teeth are chattering. Have you the fever,
That you shiver thus and you tremble?

MILA. Always at twilight and sunset,
A tremor of cold overtakes me;
Not strong am I in the nights on the mountain,
We light fires at this time in the valley, —
But speak on and heed not my suffering.

ORNELLA. Yesterday, by chance, I discovered
He had it in mind to climb up here, —
This mountain to climb, to the sheepstead.
I failed through the evening to see him,
And my blood turned cold within me.
So then I made ready this basket,
And in this my sisters aided me, —
We are three who are born of one mother, —
All three of us born marked with sorrow;
And this morning I left Acquanova,
I crossed by the ferry the river,
And the path to the mountain ascended.
Ah! you dear, dear creature of Jesus!
With what illness now are you taken?
How can I bear all this sorrow?
What can I be doing for you?
You far more violently tremble
Than when you sought our fireplace
And the pack of the reapers were hunting you.

MILA. And since — Oh! since have you seen him? Know you
If yet he has come to the sheepstead?
Be certain, Ornella, be certain!

ORNELLA. Not again have I seen him. Nor yet
Do I know if he came up the mountain, —
Since much did he have for the doing
At Gionco. Perhaps he came not.
So do not be frightened! But hear me,
And heed me. For your soul's sake,
To save it, now, Mila di Codra,
Repent ye and take ye, I prithee,
Away from us this evil doing!
Restore us Aligi, and may God go with you,
And may He have mercy upon you!

MILA. Dear sister of Aligi! Content am I, —
Yea, always to hear and to heed you.
Just is it that you strike me, —
Me, the sinful woman, me, the sorcerer's
Daughter, the witch who is shameless, —
Who for charity supplicated
The journeying pilgrim of Jesus
But a little oil to give her
To feed her sacred lamp-flame!
Perhaps behind me the Angel is weeping
Again as before; and the stones perhaps
Will speak for me, but I — shall speak not —
Shall speak not. But this say I only
In the name of sister, and if I say not

In truth, may my mother arise
From her grave, my hair grasping,
And cast me upon the black earth, bearing
Witness against her own daughter.
Only say I: I am sinless before your brother,
Before the pallet of your brother clean am I!

ORNELLA. Omnipotent God! A miracle dost Thou!

MILA. But this is the loving of Mila,
This is but my love, Ornella,
And more than this I shall speak not.
Contented am I to obey you.
All paths knows the daughter of Jorio,
Already her soul ere your coming
Had started, — ere now, O Innocent One!
Do not distrust me, O sister
Of Aligi, for no cause is there.

ORNELLA. Firm as the rock my faith is in you.
Brow unto brow have I seen in you
Truth. And the rest lies in darkness,
That I, poor one, may not fathom.
But I kiss your feet here humbly,
The feet that know well the pathways.
And my silent love and pity
Will companion you on your journey.
I will pray that the steps of your pathway
Be lessened, the pain of them softened.
And the pain that I feel and I suffer
On your head I shall lay it no longer.
No more shall I judge your misfortunes,
No more shall I judge of your loving,
Since before my dear brother sinless
Are you, in my heart I shall call you
My sister, my sister in exile. At dawning
My dreams shall meet you and often shall greet you.

MILA. Ah, in my grave were I resting,
With the black earth close to me nestling,
And in my ears, in that grave lonely,
These words were the last words sounding, —
Their promise of peace my life rounding!

ORNELLA. For your life I have spoken, I witness.
And food and drink to restore you, —
That at least for the first of your journey,
You may not lack something of comfort, —
For you I prepared in this basket;
Bread placing in it and wine, (the oil is now
Gone!) but I did not place there a flower.
Forgive me for that, since then I knew not —

MILA. A blue flower, a flower of the blue aconite —
You did not place that in your basket for me!
And you did not place there the white sheet severed
From the cloth in your loom at home woven
That I saw 'twixt the doorway and fireplace!

ORNELLA. Mila! for that hour wait on the Saviour.
But what still keeps my brother? Vainly
I sought him at the sheepfold. Oh! where is he?

MILA. He will be back again ere nightfall surely.
Needs be that I hasten! Oh, needs be!

ORNELLA. Do you mean not to see him — speak again to him?
Where then will you go for this night? Remain here.
I, too, will remain. Thus doing shall we
Be together, and strong against sorrow,
We three — Till you go at daybreak
On your path, and we go upon our path.

MILA. But already too long are the nights. Needs be
That I hasten, — hasten! You know not.
I will tell you. Also from him I received
The parting that's not to be given
A second time. Addio! Go, seek him,
And meet him, now, in the sheepfold, surely.
Detain him there longer, and tell him
All the grief that they suffer down there,
And let him not follow me! On my pathway
Unknown, I shall soon be. Rest you blessèd!
Forever rest blessèd! Oh, be you as sweet
Unto his as you were to my sorrow!
Addio! Ornella, Ornella, Ornella!

[While speaking thus, she retires toward the darkness of the cavern and ORNELLA, *softened to tears, passes out. The old herb-woman then appears at the opening of the cavern. The singing of the pilgrims may still be heard, but from a greater distance.* ANNA ONNA *enters,*

leaning on her crutch with her bag hanging by her side]

ANNA [*breathless*]. 'Has freed him, freed him, woman of the valley,
'Has freed him! Ay! from inside him
Chased away all the demons did he —
Cosma — that possessed him. A saint, surely.
He gave out a great cry like a bull's roar, —
Did the youth, and at one blow fell down
As if he had burst his chest open.
You didn't — don't say you couldn't — hear him?
And now on the grass he is sleeping.
Deeply, deeply is he sleeping; and the shepherds
Stand around and keep watch o'er him.
But where are you? I do not see you.

MILA. Anna Onna, put me to sleep!
O Granny dear, I'll give you this basket
That is brimful of eating and drinking.

ANNA. Who was she that went away hurrying?
Had she broken your heart that you cried so?
— That after her, so, you were calling?

MILA. Granny, oh, listen! This basket I'll give you,
That one on the ground, to take with you, —
If you'll put me to sleep, — make me go, —
To sleep, with the little black seeds — you know —
Of the hyoscyamus. Go off then! be eating and drinking!

ANNA. I have none. I have none left in my bag here!

MILA. The skin I will give you, too, the sheepskin
You were sleeping on here to-day.
If you give me some of those red seed-pods,
The red pods you know — twigs of the nasso.
Go off, then, go off, and fill up and guzzle!

ANNA. I have none, I have none in my bag here.
Go slower a bit, woman of the valley,
Take time, go slowly, go slowly,
Think it over a day, or a month, or a year.

MILA. O Granny dear, more will I give you!
A kerchief with pictures in color,
And of woolen cloth, three arms' lengths,
If you give me some of the herb-roots —
The same that you sell to the shepherds
That kill off the wolves so swiftly —
The root of the wolf-grass, the wolf-bane —
Go off then. Go off and mend up your bones!

ANNA. I have none, I have none left in my bag here.
Go slower a bit, woman of the valley,
Take time, go slowly, go slowly,
With time there always comes wisdom.
Think it over a day, or a month, or a year,
With the herbs of the good Mother Mountain
We can heal all our ailments and sorrows.

MILA. You will not? Very well then, I snatch thus from you
That black bag of yours. Therein I'll be finding
What will serve for me well, well indeed!

[*She tries to tear the bag away from the tottering old woman*]

ANNA. No, no. You are robbing me, your poor old granny,
You force me! The shepherd — he'd tear me —
Gouge out my eyes from their sockets.

[*A step is heard and a man's form appears in the shadows*]

Behold what this woman is doing.

MILA. Ah! it is you, it is you, Aligi!

[MILA *lets fall the bag which she had taken from the old woman and sees the man looming tall in the dim light of the mountain, but recognizing him she takes refuge in the depths of the cavern.* LAZARO DI ROIO *then enters, silent, with a rope around his arm like an ox drover about to tie up his beast. The sound of* ANNA ONNA'S *crutches striking against the stones is heard as she departs in safety*]

LAZARO. Woman, Oh, you need not be frightened.
Lazaro di Roio has come here,
But he does not carry his sickle:
It is scarcely a case of an eye for an eye,
And he does not wish to enforce it.
There was more than an ounce of blood taken
From him on the wheat-field of Mispa,
And you know cause and end of that bloodshed.
Ounce for ounce, then, he will not take from you,
Nor wish it, for all the wound's smarting —
The cicatrice, here in the forehead.
Raven feather, olive-twig crook,
Rancid oil, soot from the chimney shook,

Morn unto eve, eve unto morn,
The cursèd wound must healing scorn!
[*He gives a short, malignant laugh*]
And where I was lying, I heard ever
The weeping and wailing, the women,
Oh, not for me, but this shepherd,
Spell-bound, bewitched by the witch shrew
Way off in the far-away mountain.
Surely, woman, poor was your picking.
But my grit and my blood are back again,
And many words I shall not be talking,
My tongue is dry now for doing it,
And all for this same sad occasion.
Now then, say I, you shall come on with me,
And no talk about it, daughter of Jorio!
Waiting below is the donkey and saddle,
And also here a good rope hempen,
And others to spare, God be praised! if need be!
[Mila *remains motionless, backed up against the rock, without replying*]
Did you hear me, Mila di Codra?
Or are you deaf and dumb now?
This I am saying in quiet:
I know all about how it happened,
That time with the reapers of Norca.
If you are thinking to thwart me
With the same old tricks, undeceive you!
There's no fireplace here, nor any
Relations, nor San Giovanni
Ringing the bells of salvation.
I take three steps and I seize you,
With two good stout fellows to help me.
So now, then, and I say it in quiet,
You'd better agree to what needs be.
You may just as well do as I want you,
For if you don't do so, you'll have to!

Mila. What do you want from me? Where already
Death was, you came. Death is here, even now.
He stepped one side to let you enter.
Withdrawing awhile, still here he is waiting.
Oh, pick up that bag there; inside it
Are deadly roots enough to kill ten wolves.
If you bind it on to my jaws here
I would make of it all a good mouthful;
I would eat therein, you would see me,
As the good hungry mare that crunches
Her oats. So then, when I should be
Cold, you could take me up there and toss me
And pack me upon your donkey,
And tie with your rope like a bundle,
And shout out: "Behold the witch, shameless,
The sorceress!" Let them burn up my body,
Let the women come round and behold me,
And rejoice in deliverance. Mayhap
One would thrust in her hand, in the fire,
Without being burned in the flame,
And draw from the core of the heat my heart.

[Lazaro, *at her first bidding, takes up the bag and examines the simples. He then throws it behind him, with suspicion and distrust*]

Lazaro. Ah, ah! You want to spread some snare.
What crouch are you watching to spring on me!
In your voice I can hear all your slyness,
But I shall trap you in my lariat.
[*At this he makes his rope into a lariat*]
Not dead, neither cold do I want you.
Lazaro di Roio, — by all the gods! —
Mila di Codra, will harvest you, —
Will go with you this very October,
And for this all things are ready.
He will press the grapes with your body,
Lazaro will sink in the must with you.
[*With a sinister laugh he advances toward* Mila, *who is on the alert to elude him, the man following closely, she darting here and there, unable to escape him*]

Mila. Do not touch me! Be ashamed of yourself!
For your own son is standing behind you.

[Aligi *appears at the end of the cave. Seeing his father, he turns pale.* Lazaro, *halting in his chase, turns toward him. Father and son regard each other intently and ominously*]

Lazaro. Hola there, Aligi! What is it?

Aligi. Father, how did you come hither?

Lazaro. Has your blood been all sucked up that it's made you
So pale? As white you stand there in the light
As the whey when they squeeze out the cheeses.
Shepherd, say, why are you frightened?

Aligi. Father, what is it you wish to do here?

Lazaro. What I wish to do here? You are asking
A question of me, a right you have not.
I will tell you, however. This will I:

The yearling ewe catch in my lariat,
And lead her wherever it please me.
That done, I shall sentence the shepherd.
ALIGI. Father, this thing you shall surely not do.
LAZARO. How dare you then lift so boldly
Your white face up into mine? Be careful
Or I shall make it blush of a sudden.
Go! turn back to your sheepfold and stay there,
With your flock inside the enclosure,
Until I come there to seek you.
On your life, I say, obey me!
ALIGI. Father, I pray the Saviour to keep me
From doing you aught but obedience.
And you are able to judge and to sentence
This son of your own; but this one —
This woman, see that you leave her alone!
Leave her to weep here alone.
Do no offence unto her. It is sinful.
LAZARO. Ah! The Lord has made you crazy!
Of what saint were you just speaking?
See you not (may your eyes be blind forever!)
See you not how under her eyelashes, —
Around her neck lie hidden
The seven sins, the mortal sins?
Surely, if there should see her only
Your buck now, 'twould butt her, and you here
Are frightened lest I should offend her!
I tell you the stones of the highroad
By man and by beast are less trodden
Than she is by sin and shame trampled.
ALIGI. If it were not a sin unto God in me,
If by all men it were not deemed evil,
Father, I should say unto you that in this thing, —
In this thing you lie in your gullet!
[*He takes a few steps and places himself between his father and the woman, covering her with his body*]
LAZARO. What's that you say? Your tongue in you wither!
Down on your knees there, to beg me
Forgiveness, your face on the ground there!
And never dare you to lift up your body
Before me! Thus, on your marrow-bones,
Off with you! Herd with your dogs!
ALIGI. The Saviour will judge of me, father:
But this woman I shall not abandon,
Nor unto your wrath shall I leave her,
While living. The Saviour will judge me.
LAZARO. I am the judge of you. Who
Am I then to you, blood and body?
ALIGI. You are my own father, dear unto me.
LAZARO. I am unto you your own father, and to you
I may do as to me it seem pleasing
Because unto me you are but the ox
In my stable; you are but my shovel
And hoe. And if I should over you
Pass with my harrow and tear you
And break you in pieces, this is well done!
And if I have need of a handle
For my knife, and one I shall make myself
Out of one of your bones, this is well done!
Because I am the father and you are the son!
Do you heed? And to me over you is given
All power, since time beyond time,
And a law that is over all laws.
And as even I was to my father,
So even are you unto me, under earth.
Do you heed? And if from your memory
This thing has fallen, then thus I recall
It unto your memory. Kneel down on your knees and kiss ye
The earth on your marrow-bones
And go off without looking behind you!
ALIGI. Pass over me then with the harrow;
But touch not the woman.
[LAZARO *goes up to him, unable to restrain his rage, and lifting the rope, strikes him on the shoulder*]
LAZARO. Down, down, you dog, down, to the ground with you!
ALIGI [*falling on his knees*]. So then, my father, I kneel down before you:
The ground in front of you do I kiss,
And in the name of the true God and living
By my first tear and my infant wailing
From the time when you took me unswaddled
And in your hand held me aloft
Before the sacred face of Lord Christ, —
By all this, I beseech you, I pray you, my father,
That you tread not thus and trample
On the heart of your son sorrow-laden.
Do not thus disgrace him! I pray you;

Do not make his senses forsake him,
Nor deliver him into the hands of the False One —
The Enemy who wheels now about us!
I pray you by the angel there silent,
Who sees and who hears in that wood block!

LAZARO. Begone! Off with you! Off with you!

I shall shortly now judge of you.
Off with you, I bid you. Be off with you!

[*He strikes him cruelly with the rope.* ALIGI *rises all quivering*]

ALIGI. Let the Saviour be judge. Let him judge then
Between you and me, and let him give unto me
Light; but yet I will against you
Not lift up this my hand.

LAZARO. Be you damned! With this rope I will hang you.

[*He throws the lariat to take him but* ALIGI, *seizing the rope with a sudden jerk, takes it out of his father's hands*]

ALIGI. Christ my Saviour, help Thou me!
That I may not uplift my hand against him,
That I may not do this to my father!

LAZARO [*furious, goes to the door and calls*].

Ho, Jenne! and ho, Femo! Come here!
Come here, and see this fellow,
What he is doing (may a viper sting him!)
Fetch the ropes. Possessed is he
Most surely. His own father he threatens!

[*Running appear two men, big and muscular, bearing ropes*]

He is rebellious, this fellow!
From the womb is he damned,
And for all his days and beyond them.
The evil spirit has entered into him.
See! See! Behold how bloodless
The face is. O Jenne! You take him and hold him.
O Femo, you have the rope, take it and bind him,
For to stain myself I am not wishing.
Then go ye and seek out some one
To perform the exconjuration.

[*The two men throw themselves upon* ALIGI *and overpower him*]

ALIGI. Brothers in God! Oh, do not do this to me!
Do not imperil your soul, Jenne.
I who know you so well, who remember,
Remember you well from a baby,
Since you came as a boy to pick up the olives
In your fields. O Jenne dell Eta!
I remember you. Do not thus debase me.
Do not thus disgrace me!

[*They hold him tightly, trying to bind him, and pushing him on toward the entrance*]

Ah! dog! — The pest take you! —
No, no, no! — Mila, Mila! Hasten! —
Give me the iron there. Mila! Mila!

[*His voice, desperate and hoarse, is heard in the distance, while* LAZARO *bars* MILA'S *egress*]

MILA. Aligi, Aligi! Heaven help you!
May God avenge you! Never despair!
No power have I, no power have you,
But while I have breath in my mouth,
I am all yours! I am all for you!
Have faith! Have faith! Help shall come!
Be of good heart, Aligi! May God help you!

[MILA *gazes intently along the path where* ALIGI *was borne and listens intently for voices. In this brief interval* LAZARO *scrutinizes the cavern insidiously. From the distance comes the singing of another company of pilgrims crossing the valley*]

LAZARO. Woman, now then you have been seeing
How I am the man here. I give out the law.
You are left here alone with me.
Night is approaching, and inside here
It is now almost night. Oh, don't
Be afraid of me, Mila di Codra,
Nor yet of this red scar of mine
If you see it light up, for now even
I feel in it the beat of the fever.
Come nearer me. Quite worn out you seem to be
For sure you've not met with fat living
On this hard shepherd's pallet.
While with me you shall have, if you want it,
All of that in the valley; for Lazaro
Di Roio is one of the thrifty.
But what do you spy at? Whom do you wait for?

MILA. No one I wait for. No one is coming!

[*She is still motionless, hoping to see* ORNELLA *come and save her. Dissimulating to gain time, she*

tries to defeat LAZARO'S *intentions*]

LAZARO. You are alone with me. You need not
Be frightened. Are you persuaded?

MILA [*hesitatingly*]. I'm thinking, Lazaro di Roio,
I'm thinking of what you have promised.
I'm thinking. But what's to secure me?

LAZARO. Do not draw back. My word I keep.
All that I promise, I tell you.
Be assured, God be witness. Come to me!

MILA. And Candia della Leonessa?

LAZARO. Let the bitterness of her mouth moisten
Her thread, and with that be her weaving!

MILA. — The three daughters you have in your household?
And now the new one! — I dare not trust to it.

LAZARO. Come here! Don't draw back! Here! Feel it!
Where I tucked it. Twenty ducats,
Sewed in this coat. Do you want them?

[*He feels for them through his goatskin coat, then takes it off and throws it on the ground at her feet*]

Take them! Don't you hear them clinking?
There are twenty silver ducats.

MILA. But first I must see them and count them, —
First — before — Lazaro di Roio.
Now will I take these shears and rip it.

LAZARO. But why spy about so? You witch! surely
You're getting some little trick ready,
You're hoping yet you'll deceive me.

[*He makes a rush at her to seize her. She eludes him and seeks refuge near the walnut block*]

MILA. No, no, no! Let me alone! Let me alone!
Don't you touch me! See! See! She comes! See! See! she comes
Your own daughter — Ornella is coming.

[*She grasps the angel to resist* LAZARO'S *violence*]

No, no! Ornella, Ornella, oh, help me!

[*Suddenly* ALIGI *appears, free and unbound, at the mouth of the cave. He sees in the dim light the two figures. He throws himself upon his father. Catching sight of the axe driven into the wood, he seizes it, blind with fury and horror*]

ALIGI. Let her go! For your life!

[*He strikes his father to death.* ORNELLA, *just appearing, bends down and recognizes the dead body in the shadow of the angel. She utters a great cry*]

ORNELLA. Ah! I untied him! I untied him!

ACT III

A large country yard; in the farther end an oak, venerable with age, beyond the fields, bounded by mountains, furrowed by torrents; on the left the house of LAZARO, *the door open, the porch littered with agricultural implements; on the right the haystack, the mill, and the straw stack.*

The body of LAZARO *is lying on the floor within the house, the head resting, according to custom for one murdered, on a bundle of grape-vine twigs; the wailers, kneeling, surround the body, one of them intoning the lamentation, the others answering. At times they bow toward one another, bending till they bring their foreheads together. On the porch, between the plough and large earthen vessel, are the kindred and* SPLENDORE *and* FAVETTA. *Farther from them is* VIENDA DI GIAVE, *sitting on a hewn stone, looking pale and desolate, with the look of one dying, her mother and god-mother consoling her.* ORNELLA *is under the tree, alone, her head turned toward the path. All are in mourning.*

CHORUS OF WAILERS. Jesu, Saviour, Jesu, Saviour!
'Tis your will. 'Tis your bidding,
That a tragic death accursèd
Lazaro fell by and perished.
From peak unto peak ran the shudder,
All of the mountain was shaken.
Veiled was the sun in heaven,
Hidden his face was and covered.
Woe! Woe! Lazaro, Lazaro, Lazaro!
Alas! What tears for thee tear us!
Requiem æternam dona ei, Domine.
(O Lord! give him rest eternal.)

ORNELLA. Now, now! Coming! 'Tis coming! Far off!
The black standard! The dust rising!
O sisters, my sisters, think, oh! think
Of the mother, how to prepare her! —
That her heart may not break. But a little
And he will be here. Lo! at the near turn,

At the near turn the standard appearing!
SPLENDORE. Mother of the passion of the Son crucified,
You and you only can tell the mother, —
Go to the mother, to her heart whisper!
[*Some of the women go out to see*]
ANNA DI BOVE. It is the cypress of the field of Fiamorbo.
FELAVIA SESARA. It is the shadow of clouds passing over.
ORNELLA. It is neither the cypress nor shadow
Of storm-cloud, dear women, I see it advancing,
Neither cypress nor storm-cloud, woe's me!
But the Standard and Sign of Wrong-Doing
That is borne along with him. He's coming
The condemned one's farewells to receive here,
To take from the hands of the mother
The cup of forgetting, ere to God he commend him.
Ah! wherefore are we not all of us dying,
Dying with him? My sisters, my sisters!
[*The sisters all look out the gate toward the path*]
THE CHORUS OF WAILERS. Jesu, Jesu, it were better
That this roof should on us crumble.
Ah! Too much is this great sorrow,
Candia della Leonessa.
On the bare ground your husband lying,
Not even permitted a pillow,
But only a bundle of vine-twigs,
Under his head where he's lying.
Woe! woe! Lazaro, Lazaro, Lazaro!
Alas! What pain for thee pains us!
Requiem æternam dona ei, Domine.
SPLENDORE. Favetta, go you; go speak to her.
Go you, touch her on the shoulder,
So she may feel and turn. She is seated
Like unto a stone on the hearthstone,
Stays fixed there without moving an eyelash,
And she seems to see nothing, hear nothing;
She seems to be one with the hearthstone.
Dear Virgin of mercy and pity!
Her senses, oh, do not take from her! — Unhappy one!
Cause her to heed us, and in our eyes looking
To come to herself, dear unhappy one.
Yet I have no heart even to touch her,
And who then will say the word to her?
O sister! Go tell her: Lo! he is coming!
FAVETTA. Nor have I the heart. She affrights me.
How she looked before I seem to forget,
And how her voice sounded before,
Ere in the deep of this sorrow
We plunged. Her head has whitened
And it grows every hour whiter.
Oh! she is scarcely ours any more,
She seems from us so far away,
As if on that stone she were seated
For years a hundred times one hundred —
From one hundred years to another —
And had lost, quite lost remembrance
Of us. — Oh, just see now, just see now,
Her mouth, how shut her mouth is!
More shut than the mouth that's made silent, —
Mute on the ground there forever.
How then can she speak to us ever?
I will not touch her nor can I tell her —
"Lo! he is coming!" If she awaken
She'll fall, she'll crumble. She affrights me!
SPLENDORE. Oh, wherefore were we born, my sisters?
And wherefore brought forth by our mother?
Let us all in one sheaf be gathered,
And let Death bear us all thus away!
THE CHORUS OF WAILERS. — Ah! mercy, mercy on you, Woman!
— Ah! mercy be upon you, Women!
— Up and take heart again! The Lord God
Will uplift whom he uprooted.
If God willed it that sad be the vintage,
Mayhap He wills, too, that the olives
Be sure. Put your trust in the Lord.
— And sadder than you is another,
She who sat in her home well contented,
In plenty, mid bread and clean flour,
Entering here, fell asleep, to awaken
Amid foul misfortune and never
Again to smile. She is dying: Vienda.
Of the world beyond is she already.
— She is there without wailing or weeping!
Ah! on all human flesh have thou pity!
On all that are living have mercy!
And all who are born to suffer,
To suffer and know not wherefore!
ORNELLA. Oh, there Femo di Nerfa is coming,
The ox driver, hurriedly coming.
And there is the standard stopping
Beside the White Tabernacle.
My sisters, shall I myself go to her
And bear her the word?

Woe! oh, woe! If she does not remember
What is required of her. Lord God
Forbid that she be not ready
And all unprepared he come on her and call her,
For if his voice strike her ear on a sudden
Then surely her heart will be broken, broken!

ANNA DI BOVE. Then surely her heart will be broken,
Ornella, if you should go touch her,
For you bring bad fortune with you.
'Twas you who barred up the doorway,
'Twas you who unfettered Aligi.

THE CHORUS OF WAILERS. To whom are you leaving your ploughshare,
O Lazaro! to whom do you leave it?
Who now your fields will be tilling?
Who now your flocks will be leading?
Both father and son the Enemy
Has snared in his toils and taken.
Death of infamy! Death of infamy!
The rope, and the sack, and the blade of iron!
Woe! woe! Lazaro, Lazaro, Lazaro!
Alas! What torments for thee torment us!
Requiem æternam dona ei, Domine.

[*The ox driver appears, panting*]

FEMO DI NERFA. Where is Candia?
O ye daughters of the dead one!
Judgment is pronounced. Now kiss ye
The dust! Now grasp in your hands the ashes!
For now the Judge of Wrong-Doing
Has given the final sentence.
And all the People is the Executor
Of the Parricide, and in its hands it has him.
Now the People are bringing here your brother
That he may receive forgiveness
From his own mother, from his mother
Receive the cup of forgetfulness,
Before his right hand they shall sever,
Before in the leathern sack they sew him
With the savage mastiff and throw him
Where the deep restless waters o'erflow him!
All ye daughters of the dead one, kiss ye
The dust now; grasp in your hands now the ashes!
And may our Saviour, the Lord Jesus
Upon innocent blood have pity!

[*The three sisters rush up to each other, and then advancing slowly, remain with their heads touching each other. From the distance is heard the sound of the muffled drum*]

MARIA CORA. O Femo, how could you ever say it?

FEMO DI NERFA. Where is Candia? Why does she not appear here?

LA CINERELLA. On the hearthstone, the stone by the fireplace
She sits and gives no sign of living.

ANNA DI BOVA. And there's no one so hardy to touch her.

LA CINERELLA. And affrighted for her are her daughters.

FELAVIA SESARA. And you, Femo, did you bear witness?

LA CATALANA. And Aligi, did you have him near you?
And before the judge what did he utter?

MONICA DELLA COGNA. What said he? What did he? Aloud
Did he cry? Did he rave, the poor unfortunate one?

FEMO DI NERFA. He fell on his knees and remained so,
And upon his own hand stayed gazing,
And at times he would say, "*Mea culpa*,"
And would kiss the earth before him,
And his face looked sweet and humble,
As the face of one who was innocent.
And the angel carved out of the walnut block
Was near him there with the blood-stain.
And many about him were weeping,
And some of them said, "He is innocent."

ANNA DI BOVA. And that woman of darkness, Mila
Di Codra, has anyone seen her?

LA CATALANA. Where is the daughter of Jorio?
Was she not to be seen? What know you?

FEMO DI NERFA. They have searched all the sheepfolds and stables
Without any trace of her finding.
The shepherds have nowhere seen her,
Only Cosma, the saint of the mountain,
Seems to have seen her, and he says
That in some mountain gorge she's gone to cast her bones away.

LA CATALANA. May the crows find her yet living
And pick out her eyes. May the wolf-pack
Scent her yet living and tear her!

FELAVIA SESARA. And ever reborn to that torture
Be the damnable flesh of that woman!

MARIA CORA. Be still, be still, Felavia, silence, I say!
Be silent now! For Candia has arisen,

She is walking, coming to the threshold.
Now she goes out. O daughters, ye daughters,
She has arisen, support her!
[*The sisters separate and go toward the door*]
THE CHORUS OF WAILERS. Candia della Leonessa,
Whither go you? Who has called you?
Sealed up are your lips and silent,
And your feet are like feet fettered.
Death you are leaving behind you,
And sin you find coming to meet you.
Wheresoever going, wheresoever turning,
Thorny everywhere the pathway.
Oh! woe! woe! ashes, ashes, widow!
Oh! woe! mother, Jesu! Jesu! mercy!
De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine.
(Out of the deep, O Lord, I cry unto Thee!)

[*The mother appears at the threshold. The daughters timidly go to support her. She gazes at them in great bewilderment*]

SPLENDORE. Mother, dearest, you have risen, maybe
You need something — refreshment —
A mouthful of muscadel, a cordial?
FAVETTA. Parched are your lips, you dear one,
And bleeding are they? Shall we not bathe them?
ORNELLA. Mommy, have courage, we are with you.
Unto this great trial God has called you.
CANDIA. And from one warp came so much linen,
And from one spring so many rivers,
And from one oak so many branches,
And from one mother many daughters!
ORNELLA. Mother dear, your forehead is fevered. For the weather
To-day is stifling, and your dress is heavy,
And your dear face is all wet with moisture.
MARIA CORA. Jesu, Jesu, may she not lose her senses!
LA CINERELLA. Help her regain her mind, Madonna!
CANDIA. It is so long since I did any singing,
I fear I cannot hold the melody.
But to-day is Friday, there is no singing,
Our Saviour went to the mountain this day.
SPLENDORE. O mother dear, where does your mind wander?
Look at us! Know us! What idle fancy
Teases you? Wretched are we! What is her meaning?
CANDIA. Here, too, is the stole, and here, too, is the cup sacramental,
And this is the belfry of San Biagio,
And this is the river, and this my own cabin.
But who, who is this one who stands in my doorway?
[*Sudden terror seizes the young girls. They draw back, watching their mother, moaning and weeping*]
ORNELLA. O my sisters, we have lost her!
Lost her, also, our dear mother!
Oh! too far away do her senses stray!
SPLENDORE. Unhappy we! Whom God's malediction left
Alone in the land, orphans bereft!
FAVETTA. By the other, a new grave make ready near
And bury us living all unready here!
FELAVIA SESARA. No, no, dear girls, be not so despairing,
For the shock is but pushing her senses
Far back to some time long ago.
Let them wander! thence soon to be turning!
[CANDIA *takes several steps*]
ORNELLA. Mother, you hear me? Where are you going?
CANDIA. I have lost the heart of my dear gentle boy,
Thirty-three days ago now, nor yet do I find it;
Have you seen him anywhere? Have you met him afar?
— Upon Calvary Mountain I left him,
I left him afar on the distant mountain,
I left him afar in tears and bleeding.
MARIA CORA. Ah! she is telling her stations.
FELAVIA SESARA. Let her mind wander, let her say them!
LA CINERELLA. Let her all her heart unburden!
MONICA DELLA COGNA. O Madonna of Holy Friday,
Have pity on her! And pray for us!
[*The two women kneel and pray*]
CANDIA. Lo! now the mother sets out on her travels,
To visit her son well belovèd she travels.
— O Mother, Mother, wherefore your coming?
Among these Judeans there is no safety.
— An armful of linen cloth I am bringing
To swathe the sore wounds of your body.
— Ah, me! had you brought but a swallow of water!

— My son! — No pathway I know nor wellspring;
But if you will bend your dear head a little
A throatful of milk from my breast I will give you,
And if then you find there no milk, oh so closely
To heart I will press you, my life will go to you!
— O Mother, Mother, speak softly, softly —

[*She stops for a moment, then dragging her words, cries out suddenly with a despairing cry*]

Mother, I have been sleeping for years seven hundred,
Years seven hundred, I come from afar off.
I no longer remember the days of my cradle.

[*Struck by her own voice she stops and looks about bewildered, as if suddenly awakened from a dream. Her daughters hasten to support her. The women all rise. The beating of the drum sounds less muffled, as if approaching*]

ORNELLA. Ah! how she's trembling, how she's all trembling!
Now she swoons. Her heart is almost broken.
For two days she has tasted nothing. Gone is she!

SPLENDORE. Mamma, who is it speaks within you? What do you feel,
Speaking inside you, in the breast of you?

FAVETTA. Oh! unto us hearken; heed us, mother,
Oh! look upon us! We are here with you!

FEMO DI NERFA [*from the end of the yard*].
O women, women, he's near, the crowd with him.
The standard is passing the cistern now.
They are bringing also the angel covered.

[*The women gather under the oak to watch*]

ORNELLA [*in a loud voice*]. Mother, Aligi is coming now; Aligi is coming,
To take from your heart the token of pardon,
And drink from your hand the cup of forgetfulness.
Awaken, awaken, be brave, dear mother;
Accursèd he is not. With deep repentance
The sacred blood he has spilled redeeming.

CANDIA. 'Tis true; oh, 'tis true. With the leaves he was bruising
They stanched the blood that was gushing.
"Son Aligi," he said then, "Son Aligi,
Let go the sickle and take up the sheep-crook,
Be you the shepherd and go to the mountain."
This his commandment was kept in obedience.

SPLENDORE. Do you well understand? Aligi is coming.

CANDIA. And unto the mountain he must be returning.
What shall I do? All his new clothing
I have not yet made ready, Ornella!

ORNELLA. Mother, let us take this step. Turn now unto us; here,
In front of the house we must await him
And give our farewell to him who is leaving,
Then all in peace we shall lie down together,
Side by side in the deep bed below.

[*The daughters lead their mother out on the porch*]

CANDIA [*murmuring to herself*]. I lay down and meseemed of Jesus I dreamed,
He came to me saying, "Be not fearful!"
San Giovanni said to me, "Rest in safety."

THE CHORUS OF KINDRED. — Oh, what crowds of people follow the standard,
The whole village is coming after.
— Iona di Midia is carrying the standard.
— Oh, how still it is, like a processional!
— Oh, what sadness! On his head the veil of sable,
— On his hands the wooden fetters,
Large and heavy, big as an ox-yoke!
Head to foot the gray cloth wraps him, he is barefoot.
— Ah! Who can look longer! My face I bury,
I close up my eyes from longer seeing.
— The leathern sack Leonardo is bearing,
Biagio Gudo leads the savage mastiff.
— Mix in with the wine the roots of solatro
That he may lose his consciousness.
— Brew with the wine the herb novella
That he may lose feeling, miss suffering.

Go, Maria Cora, you who know the secrets,
Help Ornella to mix the potion.
— Dire was the deed, dire is the suffering.
Oh, what sadness! See the people!
— Silently comes all the village.
— Abandoned now are all the vineyards.
— To-day, to-day no grapes are gathered.
— Yes, to-day even the land is mourning.
— Who is not weeping? Who is not wailing?
— See Vienda! Almost in death's agony.
Better for her that she lost her senses.
— Better for her that she see not, hear not.
— Oh, woe for her bitter fate, three months only
Since we came and brought our hampers!
— And sorrow yet to come who may measure?
— No tears shall be left in us for weeping.

FEMO DI NERFA. Silence, O kindred, for here comes Iona.

[*The women turn toward the porch. There is a deep silence. The voice of* IONA]

IONA. O widow of Lazaro di Roio,
O people of this unhappy home,
Behold now! Behold now! The penitent is coming.

[*The tall figure of* IONA *appears bearing the standard. Behind him comes the parricide, robed in gray, the head covered with a black veil, both hands manacled in heavy wooden fetters. A man on one side is holding the shepherd's carved crook; others carry the angel covered with a white cloth, which they lower to the ground. The crowd pushes between the straw stack and ancient oak. The wailers, still on their knees, crawl to the door and lift up their voices in cries and wailing towards the condemned one*]

THE CHORUS OF WAILERS. Son, O son Aligi! Son, O son Aligi!
What have you done? What have you done?
Whose body is this body bleeding?
And who upon the stone has placed it?
Now hath come your hour upon you!
Black is the wine of the evil-doer!
Severed hand and death of infamy;
Severed hand and sack of leather!
Oh! woe! woe! O son of Lazaro. Lazaro
Is dead. Woe! Woe! And you slew Lazaro!
Libera, Domine, animam servi tui.
(Spare, O Lord, the soul of this thy servant.)

IONA DI MIDIA. Grief is yours, Candia della Leonessa,
O Vienda di Giave, grief is yours,
Grief is yours, daughters of the dead one! Kindred,
May the Lord Saviour have pity on all of you, women,
For into the hands of the People, judging,
The Judge has now given Aligi di Lazaro.
That upon the deed infamous we may take vengeance,
A deed upon all of us fallen, and having no equal,
Nor among our ancestors known to memory,
And may it forever be lost from memory,
By the grace of the Lord, from son to son, henceforth.
Now, therefore, the penitent one we lead hither,
That he may receive the cup of forgetfulness
From you here, Candia della Leonessa,
Since he out of your flesh and your blood was the issue,
To you 'tis conceded to lift the veil of sable,
'Tis yielded you lift to his mouth the cup of forgetting,
Since his death unto him shall be exceeding bitter.
Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine!
(Save, O Lord, these thy people)
Kyrie eleison!

THE CROWD. *Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison!*

[IONA *places his hand on* ALIGI'S *shoulder. The penitent then takes a step toward his mother, and falls, as if broken down, upon his knees*]

ALIGI. Praises to Jesus and to Mary!
I can call you no longer my mother,
'Tis given to me to bless you no longer.
This is the mouth of hell — this mouth!
To curses only these lips are given,
That sucked from you the milk of life,
That from your lips learned orisons holy
In the fear of the Lord God Almighty,
And of all of his law and commandments.
Why have I brought upon you this evil? —

You — of all women born to nourish the child,
To sing him to sleep on the lap, in the cradle! —
This would I say of my will within me,
But locked must my lips remain.
— Oh, no! Lift not up my veil of darkness
Lest thus in its fold you behold
The face of my terrible sinning.
Do not lift up my veil of darkness,
No, nor give me the cup of forgetting.
Then but little shall be my suffering,
But little the suffering decreed me.
Rather chase me with stones away,
Ay, with stones and with staves drive and chase me,
As you would chase off the mastiff even
Soon to be of my anguish companion,
And to tear at my throat and mumble it,
While my desperate spirit within me
Shall cry aloud, "Mamma! Mamma!"
When the stump of my arm is reeking
In the cursèd sack of infamy.

THE CROWD [*with hushed voices*].
— Ah! the mother, poor dear soul! See her!
See how in two nights she has whitened!
She does not weep. She can weep no longer.
— Bereft is she of her senses.
— Not moving at all. Like the statue
Of our Mater Dolorosa. Oh, have pity!
— O good Lord, have mercy on her!
Blessed Virgin, pity, help her!
— Jesus Christ have pity on her!

ALIGI. And you also, my dear ones, no longer
'Tis given me to call you sisters,
'Tis given me no longer to name you
By your names in your baptisms christened.
Like leaves of mint your names unto me,
In my mouth like leaves that are fragrant,
That brought unto me in the pastures
Unto my heart joy and freshness.
And now on my lips do I feel them,
And aloud am I fain to say them.
I crave no other consolation
Than that for my spirit's passing.
But no longer to name them 'tis given me.
And now the sweet names must faint and wither,
For who shall be lovers to sing them
At eve beneath your casement windows?
For who shall be lovers unto the sisters
Of Aligi? And now is the honey
Turned into bitterness; oh, then, chase me,
And, like a hound, hound me away.
With staves and with stones strike me.
But ere you thus chase me, oh, suffer
That I leave unto you, disconsolate,
But these two things of my sole possession,
The things that these kindly people
Carry for me: the sheep-crook of blood-wood,
Whereon I carved the three virgin sisters,
In your likeness did I carve them,
To wander the mountain pastures with me, —
The sheep-crook, and the silent angel,
That with my soul I have been carving.
Woe is me for the stain that stains it!
But the stain that stains it shall fade away
Some day, and the angel now silent
Shall speak some day, and you shall hearken,
And you shall heed. Suffer me suffer
For all I have done! With my woe profound
In comparison little I suffer!

THE CROWD. Oh! the children, poor dear souls! See them!
See how pale and how worn are their faces!
— They too are no longer weeping.
— They have no tears left for weeping.
Dry their eyes are, inward burning.
— Death has mown them with his sickle, —
To the ground laid them low ere their dying.
Down they are mown but not gathered.
— Have mercy upon them, O merciful one!
Upon these thy creatures so innocent.
— Pity, Lord Jesus, pity! Pity!

ALIGI. And you who are maiden and widow,
Who have found in the chests of your bridal
Only the vestment of mourning,
The combs of ebon, of thorns the necklace,
Your fine linen woven of tribulation,
Full of weeping your days ever more,
In heaven shall you have your nuptials,
And may you be spouse unto Jesus!
And Mary console you forever!

THE CROWD. O poor dear one! Until vespers
Hardly lasting, and now drawing
Her last breath. Lost her face is
In her hair of gold all faded,
Even all her golden tresses.
— Now like flax upon the distaff,

— Or shade-grown grass for Holy Thursday.
— Yes, Vienda, maiden-widow,
Paradise is waiting for you.
— If she is not, then who is Heaven's?
— May Our Lady take you with her!
— Put her with the white pure angels!
— Put her with the golden martyrs!

IONA DI MIDIA. Aligi, your farewells are spoken,
Rise now and depart. It grows late.
Ere long will the sun be setting.
To the Ave Maria you shall not hearken.
The evening star you shall not see glimmer.
O Candia della Leonessa,
If you, poor soul, on him have pity,
Give, if you will, the cup, not delaying,
For the mother art thou, and may console him.

THE CROWD. Candia, lift up the veil, Candia!
Press his lips to the cup, Candia,
Give him the potion, give him
Heart to bear his suffering. Rise, Candia!
— Upon your own son take pity.
— You only can help him; to you, 'tis granted.
— Have mercy upon him! Mercy, oh, mercy!

[ORNELLA *hands the mother the cup containing the potion.* FAVETTA *and* SPLENDORE *encourage the poor mother.* ALIGI, *kneeling, creeps to the door of the house and addresses the dead body*]

ALIGI. Father, father, my father Lazaro,
Hear me. You have crossed over the river,
In your bier, though it was heavier
Than the ox-cart, your bier was,
And the rock was dropped in the river.
Where the current was swiftest, you crossed it;
Father, father, my father Lazaro,
Hear me. Now I also would cross over
The river, but I — I cannot. I am going
To seek out that rock at the bottom.
And then I shall go to find you:
And over me you will pass the harrow,
Through all eternity to tear me,
Through all eternity to lacerate me.
Father of mine, full soon I'll be with you!

[*The mother goes toward him in deep horror. Bending down she lifts the veil, presses his head upon her breast with her left hand, takes the cup* ORNELLA *offers and puts it to* ALIGI'S *lips. A confusion of muffled voices rises from the people in the yard and down the path*]

IONA DI MIDIA. *Suscipe, Domine, servum tuum.*
(Accept, O Lord, this thy servant.)
Kyrie eleison.

THE CROWD. *Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison,*
Miserere, Deus, miserere.
— Do you see, do you see his face?
This do we see upon earth, Jesus!
— Oh! Oh! Passion of the Saviour!
— But who is calling aloud? And wherefore?
— Be silent now! Hush, hush! Who is calling?
— The daughter of Jorio! The daughter of Jorio, Mila di Codra!
— Great God, but this is a miracle!
— It is the daughter of Jorio coming.
— Good God! She is raised from the dead!
— Make room! Make room! Let her pass by!
— Accursèd dog, are you yet living?
— Ah! Witch of Hell, is it you?
— She-dog! Harlot! Carrion!
— Back! Back! Make room! Let her pass!
— Come, she-thing, come! Make way!
— Let her pass through! Let her alone! In the Lord's name!

[ALIGI *rises to his feet, his face uncovered. He looks toward the clamoring crowd, the mother and sisters still near him. Impetuously opening her way through the crowd,* MILA *appears*]

MILA DI CODRA. Mother of Aligi, sisters
Of Aligi, Bride and Kindred,
Standard-bearer of Wrong-Doing, and you,
All ye just people! Judge of God!
I am Mila di Codra.
I come to confess. Give me hearing.
The saint of the mountain has sent me.
I have come down from the mountain,
I am here to confess in public
Before all. Give me hearing.

IONA DI MIDIA. Silence! Be silent! Let her have leave
To speak, in the name of God, let her.
Confess yourself, Mila di Codra.
All the just people shall judge you.

MILA. Aligi, the beloved son of Lazaro,

Is innocent. He did not commit
Parricide. But by me indeed was his father
Slain, by me was he killed with the axe.
ALIGI. Mila, God be witness that thou liest!
IONA. He has confessed it. He is guilty.
But you too are guilty, guilty with him.
THE CROWD. To the fire with her! To the fire with her! Now, Iona,
Give her to us, let us destroy her.
— To the brushheap with the sorceress;
Let them perish in the same hour together!
— No, no! I said it was so. He is innocent.
— He confessed it! He confessed it! The woman
Spurred him to do it. But he struck the blow.
— Both of them guilty! To the fire! To the fire!
MILA. People of God! Give me hearing
And afterward punish me.
I am ready. For this did I come here.
IONA. Silence! All! Let her speak!
MILA. Aligi, dear son of Lazaro,
Is innocent. But he knows it not.
ALIGI. Mila, God be witness that thou liest.
Ornella, (oh! forgive me that I dare to
Name you!) bear thou witness
That she is deceiving the good people.
MILA. He does not know. Aught of that hour
Is gone from his memory. He is bewitched.
I have upset his reason,
I have confused his memory.
I am the Sorcerer's daughter. There is no
Sorcery that I do not know well,
None that I cannot weave. Is there one
Of the kindred among you, that one
Who accused me in this very place,
The evening of Santo Giovanni,
When I entered here by that door before us?
Let her come forth and accuse me again!
LA CATALANA. I am that one. I am here.
MILA. Do you bear witness and tell for me
Of those whom I have caused to be ill,
Of those whom I have brought unto death,
Of those whom I have in suffering held.
LA CATALANA. Giovanna Cametra, I know.
And the poor soul of the Marane,
And Alfonso and Tillura, I know.
And that you do harm to every one.
MILA. Now have you heard this thing, all you good people,
What this servant of God hath well said and truly?
Here I confess. The good saint of the mountain
Has touched to the quick my sorrowing conscience,
Here I confess and repent. Oh, permit not
The innocent blood to perish.
Punishment do I crave. Oh, punish me greatly!
To bring down ruin and to sunder
Dear ties and bring joys to destruction,
To take human lives on the day of the wedding
Did I come here to cross this threshold,
Of the fireplace there I made myself
The mistress, the hearth I bewitched,
The wine of hospitality I conjured,
Drink it I did not, but spilled it with sorceries.
The love of the son, the love of the father,
I turned into mutual hatred;
In the heart of the bride all joy strangled,
And by this my cunning, the tears
Of these young and innocent sisters
I bent to the aid of my wishes.
Tell me then, ye friends and kindred,
Tell me then, in the name of the Highest,
How great, how great is this my iniquity!
CHORUS OF THE KINDRED. It is true! It is true! All this has she done.
Thus glided she in, the wandering she-dog!
While yet Cinerella was pouring
Her handful of wheat on Vienda.
Very swiftly she did all her trickery,
By her evil wishes overthrowing
Very swiftly the young bridegroom.
And we all cried out against it.
But in vain was our crying. She had the trick of it.
It is true. Now only does she speak truly.
Praises to Him who this light giveth!
[ALIGI, *with bent head, his chin resting on his breast, in the shadow of the veil, is intent and in a terrible perturbation and contest of soul, the symptoms at the same time appearing in him of the effect of the potion*]
ALIGI. No, no, it is not true; she is deceiving
You, good people, do not heed her,

For this woman is deceiving you.
All of them here were all against her,
Heaping shame and hatred on her,
And I saw the silent angel
Stand behind her. With these eyes I saw him,
These mortal eyes that shall not witness
On this day the star of vesper.
I saw him gazing at me, weeping.
O Iona, it was a miracle,
A sign to show me her, God's dear one.

MILA. O Aligi, you poor shepherd!
Ignorant youth, and too believing!
That was the Apostate Angel!

[*They all cross themselves, except* ALIGI, *prevented from doing so by his fetters, and* ORNELLA *who, standing alone at one side of the porch, gazes intently on the voluntary victim*]

Then appeared the Apostate Angel,
(Pardon of God I must ever lack,
Nor of you, Aligi, be pardoned!)
He appeared your own two eyes to deceive.
It was the false and iniquitous angel.

MARIA CORA. I said it was so. At the time I said it.
It was a sacrilege then, I cried.

LA CINERELLA. And I said it, too, and cried out
When she dared call it the guardian angel
To watch over her. I cried out,
"She is blaspheming, she is blaspheming!"

MILA. Aligi, forgiveness from you, I know,
Cannot be, even if God forgive me.
But I must all my fraud uncover.
Ornella, oh! do not gaze upon me
As you gaze. I must stay alone!
Aligi, then when I came to the sheepstead,
Then, even, when you found me seated,
I was planning out your ruin.
And then you carved the block of walnut,
Ah, poor wretch, with your own chisel,
In the fallen angel's image!
(There it is, with the white cloth covered,
I feel it.) Ah! from dawn until evening
With secret art I wove spells upon you!
Remember them, do you not now of me?
How much love I bestowed upon you!
How much humility, in voice and demeanor —
Before your very face spells weaving?
Remember them, do you not now of me?
How pure we remained, how pure
I lay on your shepherd's pallet?
And how then? — how (did you not inquire?)
Such purity then, timidity, then,
In the sinning wayfarer
Whom the reapers of Norca
Had shamed as the shameless one
Before your mother? I was cunning,
Yea, cunning was I with my magic.
And did you not see me then gather
The chips from your angel and shavings,
And burn them, words muttering?
For the hour of blood I was making ready.
For of old against Lazaro
I nursed an old-time rancor.
You struck in your axe in the angel, —
Oh, now must you heed me, God's people!
Then there came a great power upon me
To wield over him there now fettered.
It was close upon night in that ill-fated
Lodging. Lust-crazed then his father
Had seized me to drag toward the entrance,
When Aligi threw himself on us,
In order to save and defend me.
I brandished the axe then with swiftness.
In the darkness I struck him,
I struck him again. Yea, to death I felled him!
With the same stroke I cried, "You have killed him."
To the son I cried out, "You have killed him.
Killed him!" And great in me was my power.
A parricide with my cry I made him —
In his own soul enslaved unto my soul.
"I have killed him!" he answered, and swooning,
He fell in the bloodshed, naught otherwise knowing.

[CANDIA, *with a frantic impulse, seizes with both hands her son, become once more her own. Then, detaching herself from him, with wilder and threatening gestures, advances on her enemy, but the daughters restrain her*]

CHORUS OF KINDRED. Let her do it, let her, Ornella!
— Let her tear her heart! Let her eat
Her heart! Heart for heart!
Let her seize her and take her
And underfoot trample her.
— Let her crush in and shiver
Temple to temple and shell out her teeth.
Let her do it, let her, Ornella!
Unless she do this she will not win back
Her mind and her senses in health again.
— Iona, Iona, Aligi is innocent.

— Unshackle him! Unshackle him!
— Take off the veil! Give him back to us!
— The day is ours, the people do justice.
— The righteous people give judgment.
— Command that he now be set free.

[MILA *retreats near the covered angel, looking toward* ALIGI, *who is already under the influence of the potion*]

THE CROWD. — Praises be to God! Glory be to God! Glory to the Father!
— From us is this infamy lifted.
— Not upon us rests this blood-stain.
— From our generation came forth
No parricide. To God be the glory!
— Lazaro was killed by the woman,
The stranger, di Codra dalle Farne.
— We have said and pronounced: he is innocent.
Aligi is innocent. Unbind him!
— Let him be free this very moment!
— Let him be given unto his mother!
— Iona, Iona, untie him! Untie him!
Unto us this day the Judge of Wrong-Doing
Over one head gave us full power.
— Take the head of the sorceress!
— To the fire, to the fire with the witch!
— To the brushheap with the sorceress!
— O Iona di Midia, heed the people!
Unbind the innocent! Up, Iona!
— To the brushheap with the daughter
Of Jorio, the daughter of Jorio!

MILA. Yes, yes, ye just people, yes, ye people
Of God! Take ye your vengeance on me!
And put ye in the fire to burn with me
The Apostate Angel, the false one, —
Let it feed the flames to burn me
And let it with me be consumed!

ALIGI. Oh! voice of promising, voice of deceit,
Utterly tear away from within me
All of the beauty that seemed to reign there,
Beauty so dear unto me! Stifle
Within my soul the memory of her!
Will that I have heard her voice never,
Rejoiced in it never! Smooth out within me
All of those furrows of loving
That opened in me, when my bosom
Was unto her words of deceiving
As unto the mountain that's channelled
With the streams of melting snow! Close up within me
The furrow of all that hope and aspiring
Wherein coursed the freshness and gladness
Of all of those days of deceiving!
Cancel within me all traces of her!
Will it that I have heard and believed never!
But if this is not to be given me, and I am the one
Who heard and believed and hoped greatly,
And if I adored an angel of evil,
Oh! then I pray that ye both my hands sever,
And hide me away in the sack of leather,
(Oh! do not remove it, Leonardo)
And cast me into the whirling torrent,
To slumber there for years seven hundred,
To sleep in the depths there under the water;
In the pit of the river-bed, years seven hundred,
And never remember the day
When God lighted the light in my eyes!

ORNELLA. Mila, Mila, 'tis the delirium,
The craze of the cup of forgetfulness
To console him he took from the mother.

THE CROWD. — Untie him, Iona, he is delirious.
— He has taken the wine potion.
— Let his mother lay him down on the settle.
— Let sleep come! Let him slumber!
— Let the good God give him slumber.

[IONA *gives the standard to another and comes to* ALIGI *to untie him*]

ALIGI. Yes, for a little while free me, Iona,
So that I may lift my hand against her,
(No, no, burn her not, for fire is beautiful!)
So that I call all the dead of my birthplace,
Those of years far away and forgotten,
Far, far away, far, far away,
Lying under the sod, fourscore fathom,
To curse her forever, to curse her!

MILA [*with a heart-rending cry*].
Aligi, Aligi, not you!
Oh! you cannot, you must not.

[*Freed from the manacles, the veil withdrawn,* ALIGI *comes forward but falls back unconscious in the arms of his mother, the older sisters and the kindred gathering around him*]

CHORUS OF KINDRED. You need not be frightened. 'Tis the wine only,
'Tis the vertigo seizes him.
— Now the stupor falls upon him.

— Now slumber, deep slumber, o'erpowers him.
— Let him sleep, and may God give him peace!
— Let him lie down! Let him slumber!
— Vienda, Vienda, he is yours again.
— From the other world both will return now.
Laus Deo! Laus Deo! Gloria Patri!

[IONA *puts the manacles upon* MILA'S *wrists, who offers both arms and covers her head with the black veil; then taking the standard of Wrong-Doing he pushes her toward the crowd*]

IONA. I give to you, just people,
Into your hands, Mila di Codra,
The daughter of Jorio, that one
Who does harm to every one.
Do you perform justice upon her,
And let her ashes be scattered.
O Lord, save thy people.
Kyrie eleison.

THE CROWD. *Christe eleison! Kyrie eleison!*

To the fire, to the flames with the daughter
Of Jorio! The daughter of Jorio!
And to the fire with the Apostate Angel!
To the brushheap with them! To hell-fire with them!

ORNELLA [*with full voice in majesty*].
Mila, Mila! My sister in Jesus,
I kiss your feet that bear you away!
Heaven is for thee!

MILA [*from within the crowd*]. The flame is beautiful! The flame is beautiful!

THE END

LIKE FALLING LEAVES

(*1900*)

By Giuseppe Giacosa

GIUSEPPE GIACOSA (1847–1906)
AND "LIKE FALLING LEAVES" (*COME LE FOGLIE*)

MODERN Italy is fairly represented in Doctor Goldberg's voluminous "The Drama of Transition: Native and Exotic Playcraft" (Stewart and Kidd, 1922, pp. 125–204), where he discusses Benelli, Giovanni Verga (1840–1922), Enrico Luigi Morselli (1882–1921), Forzano, Marinetti and Pirandello. "Three Plays" (E. P. Dutton and Company, 1922), by the latter, are available in the English translation of Edward Storer and Arthur Livingston.[1] Like the Spanish modern drama, the Italian stage is at last being opened up for America. Benelli's "The Jest" and "The Three Kings", Pirandello's "Six Characters in Search of an Author" and "Henry IV" are in the memory of recent playgoers, as well as D'Annunzio's "The Dead City", Marco Praga's "The Closed Door", and Gallarati-Scotti's "Thy Will Be Done", three plays in the repertory of Eleonora Duse on her visit to New York in 1923.

Of commentary, however, there is little for the English reader to turn to. Note, for instance, Professor MacClintock's references to Giacosa (p. 294), in his "Contemporary Drama of Italy." It is a strikingly sympathetic study. He claims that Giacosa "is the bridge, the connecting link between the Neo-Romantics and the true moderns. In turn, neo-romantic, semi-realistic, veristic, genuinely realistic, with an Ibsenite interlude, he followed closely the intellectual and dramatic fashions of his artistic lifetime. His changes of manner, however, must not be charged to superficial versatility or to indifference. There is none of that copious fertility which merely follows the mode; his plays are the produce of slow and painstaking elaboration. Rather is his work the product of his intimate and varied contact with the life of his time, the response of his sensitive soul to the changing psychic and social atmosphere of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was late in life when in the realistic bourgeois comedy he finally found himself."

"I am inclined . . . to believe," writes Addison McLeod, "that 'Come le Foglie' is Giacosa's greatest play; his most profound and original; his most worthy to be remembered. It is particularly Italian, true."

The playwright was born at Colleretta-Parella, near Ivrea, in the Valley of Aosta, October 21, 1847. It was there, also, he died, September 2, 1906. He was graduated in the law from the University of Turin, encouraged by his father, who was himself a Piedmontese lawyer. But the other side of his father — the taste of the *litterateur* — conquered in the young man, and, in 1873, he turned to the practice of letters. One can find many autobiographical touches in "Una Partita a Scacchi", which followed this decision, published in the *Nuova Antologia* in March, 1872, and played April 30, 1873.

[1] Another volume of Pirandello translations by Mr. Livingston, entitled "Each in His Own Way, and Two Other Plays", has just been issued by E. P. Dutton and Company, 1923.

Thus began the career of Giuseppi Giacosa, in which there were widely divergent literary types of which he became master, progressing from a certain love for the Middle Ages to an equally great passion for truth in his more realistic pieces. He was romantic, uncompromisingly realistic, interested in history and fancy, in the comedy and tragedy of situation and character. No one can read "Like Falling Leaves" (Come le Foglie) without sensing his unerring psychologic insight.

In his evolution, Giacosa shows distinctly the influence of the French schools of drama, typified in Augier, Dumas *fils*, Labiche, de Musset, Marivaux, Zola and Becque. In fact, it is suggestive to measure the social value of "Like Falling Leaves" with Becque's "The Vultures." Commentators call attention to the time when Zola visited Giacosa, and the latter deplored that the great French writer did not laugh. It was such doleful attitude of self-consciousness which made the Italian, writing in 1875 an interlude on Goldoni, turn against what he considered the morbidness of modern drama. He was also markedly influenced by Ibsen.

It is a strange literary contrast, this love of the Middle Ages — Giacosa's early delight seemed to be among what he called "*storie di battaglie, d' amore, di cortesie*" — with the later Giacosa, student of contemporary manners. In whatever form, whether it be reflective of his native Italian background, or whether a contemporary problem, Giacosa rapidly rose in public favor. He came to America at the time Sarah Bernhardt produced his "La Dame de Challant" (December, 1891), and as a result of this visit published, in 1898, his "Impressioni d' America." In his lifetime he was director of the *Società degli Autori*, and a member of the *Accademia dei filo-drammatica*. He also gave public readings of his plays. In America his name is most familiarly connected with the Opera, as co-writer with Luigi Illica, of the librettos for "La Bohème", "Tosca" and "Madama Butterfly." In 1901, he founded *La Lettera*.[1] Many of his sketches, historical papers, lectures and addresses have been published. Toward the latter part of his life, Giacosa resided in Milan, and served there on the Communal Council.

It was in Milan that "Come le Foglie" was first produced, on January 31, 1900.

[1] The student is referred to an edition of "Una Partita a Scacchi", edited by Ruth Shepard Phelps (University of Chicago Press, 1921), and to an edition of "Tristi Amori", edited by R. Altrocchi and B. M. Woodbridge (University of Chicago Press, 1920), with an Introduction by Stanley A. Smith. From the bibliography of the latter work, I draw the followings references: B. Croce, "Giuseppe Giacosa", in *La Critica*, VI (1908), 1–17; M. Muret, "La littérature italienne d'aujourd'hui" (Paris, 1906), 35–57.

LIKE FALLING LEAVES

(*COME LE FOGLIE*)

(*1900*)

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By GIUSEPPE GIACOSA

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN BY
EDITH AND ALLAN UPDEGRAFF

EDITED BY EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

PERSONS

Giovanni Rosani, *fifty-six years old*
Giulia, *his second wife, thirty-four years old*
Tommy, *twenty-seven years old* } *Children of Giovanni*
Nennele, *twenty-two years old* } *by his first wife*
Signora Lauri
Signora Irene
Mme. Lablanche, *a dressmaker*
Helmer Strile, *an artist*
An Old Artist
A Gentleman
Andrea } *servants*
Gaspare }
Lucia, *an old servant*
Marta, *a cook*
A Groom
Several Porters

Copyright, 1913,
By LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

All dramatic rights reserved
By Edwin Björkman.

LIKE FALLING LEAVES

ACT I

A sumptuous drawing-room which opens by sliding doors into a still more sumptuous dining-room. The latter is furnished in carved walnut and hung with stamped leather in a design of large gold flowers on a dark background. The ceiling of the drawing-room has gilded panels and the walls are covered with tapestry. It is elegantly furnished after the English fashion. The large dining-room table is covered with articles of baggage, shawl-straps, umbrellas, etc. There is no bric-à-brac about the rooms. It is apparent that the family is about to leave the house for good. At the right, two doors: the first leads into GIOVANNI'S *room, the second into* TOMMY'S. *At the left, in the rear, a door leading to the outside. Near the front a door which looks into* GIULIA'S *room. The dining-room has a single door in the corner to the right of the audience.*

As the curtain rises, three porters loaded with trunks come from the dining-room and go out by the outer door. In the dining-room LUCIA *comes and goes with odds and ends that she puts down on the table.* NENNELE *in the drawing-room, standing beside a pier table, is noting down the various articles of baggage on a sheet of paper. A violent and impatient ringing is heard from time to time.*

NENNELE [*to the* PORTERS]. How many are there?

A PORTER. Six down-stairs and three here. Nine.

[*They go out*]

NENNELE. Lucia.

LUCIA. Yes, miss.

NENNELE. How many valises are there still to come?

LUCIA. Three of the mistress's and two of the young gentleman's.

NENNELE. Are they ready?

LUCIA. I have just closed the mistress's last one. I don't know about the young gentleman's.

NENNELE. When Aunt Irene comes, you must call father at once.

LUCIA. Yes, miss.

NENNELE. Where is father?

LUCIA. I don't know. He has been wandering about the house all morning. He comes and goes and can't stay still a moment. I went into his room an hour ago to take him the mail, and he was standing in front of the mirror drumming on the glass with his fingers. Then he went down to the stables. Then he came up here again. Haven't you seen him yet?

NENNELE. Oh yes. As soon as I was up I went in to bid him good morning.

LUCIA. And just to think that he had his valise locked at five o'clock! And he helped Andrea to take it down-stairs. He knew perfectly well that the porters were coming. I wanted to do it for him, but he wouldn't let me. He said: "Don't bother me; I like the exercise." [*Pause, then almost in tears*] Ah, Miss Nennele, to think that before an hour has passed —

NENNELE. Hush, hush! [*Insistent ringing of the bell*] Who in the world is ringing like that?

LUCIA. It must be the young gentleman.

TOMMY [*appears in the doorway of his room; he wears knickerbockers and stockings of fine wool in tourist style; he is in his shirt sleeves*]. Gaspare! Where's Gaspare?

LUCIA. He's down-stairs to help with the loading.

TOMMY. I've been calling him for half an hour. Tell him to come up and help me dress.

NENNELE. Father told him to go. Can't you dress yourself?

TOMMY. Oh yes, if I have to; but it's an awful bore at such an hour.

NENNELE. It's half past nine. I dressed myself without help at six.

TOMMY. I congratulate you. [*To* LUCIA] All right. Don't bother calling him.

GIULIA [*calls from her room*]. Lucia.

LUCIA. I'm coming.

[*Enters* GIULIA'S *room*]

NENNELE. Are your things strapped up?

TOMMY. Yes, O model of virtue. The big trunk is strapped. Gaspare was just about to close the little one when they called him away. I tried to close it myself, but it was too much like work. The tub won't go in.

NENNELE. Leave it then. What's the difference?

TOMMY. Fine! I won't take any baths in Switzerland. Who said "poor but clean?"

[*He begins to tie his necktie*]

NENNELE. Let me do it. [*Ties it for him*] Oh, Tommy, this is all the valet and chambermaid you'll have from now on.

TOMMY. To tell the truth, don't you enjoy the prospect of a coarse and common existence?

NENNELE. No; but I'm not dying of grief.

TOMMY. Quite right. These are the heroic resolutions of the first moment. But you'll see. We're all busy showing what we're made of now — but wait till later, when it begins to get stale.

[LUCIA *passes from* GIULIA'S *room toward the outer door*]

NENNELE. Are you going downstairs?

LUCIA. I am going to take out these notes for the mistress.

NENNELE. To the post-office?

LUCIA. No, to their addresses.

NENNELE. Now?

LUCIA. The mistress told me to take a cab.

NENNELE. Very well. Go along.

[LUCIA *goes out*]

TOMMY. The last farewells go forth. [*Gives a piece of money to* NENNELE] For you.

NENNELE. What is it? A gold piece?

TOMMY. A tip. Take it. A little brotherly token.

NENNELE. But how about you?

TOMMY. Oh, don't worry about me.

[*He makes a gesture to indicate that he has plenty more*]

NENNELE. In that case, thanks. Now hurry and get dressed. [TOMMY *turns to go*] And then come back here and let's have a little talk together, you and I.

TOMMY. I'll have to strap up the travelling rugs.

NENNELE. Bring them here and I'll help you. Will you?

TOMMY. With great pleasure.

[*Returns to his room*]

[*The* PORTERS *return empty-handed*]

NENNELE [*to the* PORTERS]. This way.

[*Knocks at the door of* GIULIA'S *room*]

GIULIA [*from within*]. Who is it?

NENNELE. May the men come in and get the trunks?

GIULIA [*from within*]. Come in, come in.

[*The* PORTERS *enter*]

ANDREA [*comes from the back of the dining-room with a bunch of keys; he is not in livery*] These are the keys of our room, the kitchen and the servants' hall.

NENNELE. Have you gone through the servants' quarters? Is there nothing left in them?

ANDREA. Nothing that belongs to the servants. I locked up everything myself.

NENNELE. That's right. Put the keys there in the big sideboard in the dining-room. The others are in the drawer at the right. Are they properly tagged?

ANDREA. Yes, miss. I've checked them up. Everything is in order.

NENNELE. That's good.

ANDREA. Have you any other orders, miss?

NENNELE. No, you may go.

[*The* PORTERS *cross with the trunks*]

TOMMY [*brings in a shawl-strap, a Scotch plaid and a light overcoat*]. There you are. [*Throws everything on the sofa*] Wait a minute. [*Returns to his room*]

NENNELE. Now don't bring too much stuff.

TOMMY [*from his room*]. Only what I need. [*He reënters with other things, among them two tennis racquets*] That's all. Now what do you want?

NENNELE. Oh, nothing. I just wanted to talk a moment with somebody who understands. With father I have to be cheerful. Mamma isn't

ur mother! For three hours now I ave been giving what seems like uneral directions. I feel as if I were urying our home. And more than hat, more than that!

TOMMY. You have a perfect genius or melancholy.

NENNELE. Not at all. It would ake more than this to really discourage me. But I feel sad — a little. I have eft my room never to enter it again. I losed the windows and barred the hutters and made it so dark that I ould scarcely see the way out. Just s I was about to leave a sort of fear ame over me. It seemed to me that saw myself dead on the bed. It was ll my youth that was dead, the flower f my life.

TOMMY [*lighting a cigarette*]. Poor Nennele!

NENNELE. Other people will go into t. Everything will be different — the walls, the furniture, the curtains. Do you know what I wrote on the wall beside the window? I wrote: "Whoever you are that occupy this room, may you be unhappy in it. Nennele."

TOMMY. Then the house has no chance to find a buyer.

NENNELE. What? You really think —

[*She opens the shawl-strap and spreads it out on the table*]

TOMMY [*smiling*]. No, no, no. Don't let that worry you. I should be only to glad to go into a room bewitched by you. Poor Nanni, Nenne, Nennelle! So young and so vindictive! Don't you realize that you oughtn't to set so much store by worldly goods?

NENNELE. Oh, but you know, I'm not at all afraid of poverty.

TOMMY. Of course. Not a bit!

NENNELE. Honestly, I'm not. Listen. I have already told father. [*Folds the overcoat*] I will give lessons n English. There must be plenty of pupils in Geneva.

TOMMY. The other way! No, no, no! The sleeves should be folded inside. [*Folds the sleeves*] There! And will give lessons in tennis. Lay them on top of the tails now —

NENNELE. This way?

TOMMY. Yes. The Lord help you if you spoil that overcoat for me. It's a London model. And mamma will portray Lake Leman and the Castle of Chillon in water-colors. Sales assured.

NENNELE. She laid in a supply of paints yesterday.

TOMMY. Money well spent.

NENNELE. The dealer came this morning to get that well-spent money.

TOMMY. What? Hadn't she paid?

NENNELE. No. But he discovered that we were going away — they all know it now — and came down on us like a thunderbolt.

TOMMY. And what said mamma?

NENNELE. She was locked in her room. I had to talk to her through the door. She said that she had intended to send the money before we left. But the dealer kept on fussing around, so I paid him eighty *lire*.

TOMMY. *You* did?

NENNELE. And I gave another eighty *lire* to the glove-maker and sixty to the perfumer, all for things she has bought just recently. Now I have hardly any money left except your gold piece. If any more duns come they'll have to be sent to father.

TOMMY. Why yes. All the same, you did right. Father must be short of money just now.

NENNELE. He especially asked that all the bills be sent in early, because he didn't want to leave any dragging along.

TOMMY. Why, to be sure. The little debts have to be paid.

NENNELE. The little ones, and the big ones, too.

TOMMY. Of course. I only meant that the little ones cry out with a louder voice.

NENNELE. That's so. Those people looked me over with such distrust! They stared at this furniture, this luxury, with such ironical looks! You know, nobody believes that we are really ruined.

TOMMY. No?

NENNELE [*takes the racquet case in her hand*]. You're going to take the racquets along?

TOMMY. I should say I was.

NENNELE. What for?

TOMMY. Why, don't you know that Geneva is one of my fields of glory? I am an honorary member of the Helvetic Club. I carried off the international prize for tennis there two years ago.

NENNELE. It was different then.

[*She begins to pack the racquet case*]

TOMMY. What is different? We are not quite so rich, that's all. What are you doing?

NENNELE. I'm packing the racquets.

TOMMY. They go outside under the straps so that they can be seen.

NENNELE. Then even you don't believe that we are really ruined.

TOMMY. It's a matter of interpretation.

NENNELE. That dealer in paints said that millions are covered with pitch, so that they stick to the hands that they pass through. And he meant it as an insult.

TOMMY. But what harm is there in that?

NENNELE. In that case our poverty would be only make-believe. If there isn't any harm in it, why put up a pretence?

TOMMY. I suppose you see before you black poverty, the garret, the straw pallet, and the kind lady suitably attired for charity-visiting, who will come and bring one woollen blanket for the whole family.

NENNELE. Yesterday Lucia begged father to take her with us. She said she didn't want any wages. Father thanked her with his eyes full of tears — I was there and saw it — and he told her that our means would not permit him to take her along.

TOMMY. I'm afraid those things are part of the game.

NENNELE. You think it's all a pretence then?

TOMMY. How can I put it so that you'll get my meaning? You can't compare the attitude toward life of people like us, who have never known anything but the exquisite and the beautiful, with that of a man who for forty years has worked hard from morning till night. Our feelings have the elevation of uselessness. We represent a superior humanity. Neither you nor I have anything to do with sordid reality.

NENNELE. And yet you are quite willing to accept the good things of reality.

TOMMY. I'll take what comes my way.

NENNELE. You make me fairly long for poverty.

TOMMY. A matter of personal taste. As for our affairs, I assure you that I know nothing about them.

NENNELE. Well, then, don't think evil.

TOMMY. You don't want me to think evil? It's done. I don't think evil.

NENNELE. It's impossible to talk seriously with you. Help me to fasten the straps.

TOMMY. Poor Lucia! And she wanted to come without wages!

NENNELE. She's the only one I dare be at all familiar with. The men servants overawe me when they are dressed like other people.

TOMMY. They don't me. Gaspare came into my room this morning arrayed in a plaid smoking-jacket that I used to wear last year — and with tan shoes! Have you seen him?

NENNELE. I didn't especially notice him.

TOMMY. He gave quite the effect of a gentleman, clean-shaven as he is —

NENNELE. He has all the essentials.

TOMMY. He certainly has a more distinguished air than our cousin, Massino, otherwise known as "The Saviour."

NENNELE. That's not saying a great deal.

TOMMY. To think that there in Switzerland we'll always have him under our feet!

NENNELE. Worse than that. I'm afraid it's we who will be under his feet.

TOMMY. And he so handsomely shod! Do you remember those wonderful boots of his?

NENNELE. And what a waistcoat! He thought he was making an impression, you know.

TOMMY. He's unprejudiced.

NENNELE. He's determined.

TOMMY. He's enterprising.

NENNELE. He's smug.

TOMMY. And he will want to marry you.

NENNELE. He won't do it, though.

TOMMY. Think of his offering his own uncle a salary of two hundred and fifty *lire* a month!

NENNELE. I can't understand how father came to accept it.

TOMMY. But I'll be there to help things along.

NENNELE. Oh, Tommy, it' slucky that I have you around. I was in the depths and you've quite cheered me up again.

TOMMY. That's my business in life.

[GASPARE *enters from the outer door dressed in a plaid smoking-jacket*]

NENNELE. Here's Gaspare.

TOMMY. Blessed is he who beholds him!

GASPARE. I was in the courtyard.

TOMMY [*to* NENNELE]. Look and see if he isn't a perfect gentleman.

GASPARE. Have you any orders for me?

TOMMY. Why, if I'm not mistaken, there is still the tub to be got into my trunk.

GASPARE. I'll attend to it at once.

TOMMY. If you will have the kindness.

[GASPARE *goes into* TOMMY'S *room*]

NENNELE [*to* TOMMY, *who is following* GASPARE]. You carried it off beautifully, but I noticed that you didn't venture on any familiarities.

TOMMY. I was afraid he might return them.

[*He goes out*]

ANDREA [*entering*]. Miss Nennele, Madame Lablanche is here.

NENNELE. The dressmaker! What can she want?

ANDREA. She asked for the mistress. She has a little girl with a box with her.

NENNELE. Oh, Heavens! Didn't you explain to her?

ANDREA. I told her, but she insists.

NENNELE. See if father is in his room.

ANDREA. He isn't there. I saw him just now talking to the gardener. Shall I call him?

NENNELE. No, no. Where is he?

ANDREA. In the greenhouse.

NENNELE. Show her in.

[ANDREA *obeys.* MME. LABLANCHE *enters. The little* GIRL *puts down the box on a chair near the door and remains in the background*]

NENNELE [to ANDREA]. Go and tell your mistress.

[ANDREA *goes out*]

MME. LABLANCHE. Good morning, Mademoiselle.

NENNELE. Good morning. My mother will be here in a moment.

[*Goes into the dining-room*]

GIULIA [*comes from her room dressed in a very beautiful travelling costume*]. We are just on the point of leaving the city, Madame Lablanche.

MME. LABLANCHE. Signora Altrovino told me so last evening. I at once set about finishing Madame's dress. My girls worked all night.

GIULIA. Thanks. But it was not pressing. Indeed, I was just writing to you about it. A sudden death in the family —

MME. LABLANCHE. Oh, I am very sorry!

GIULIA. And I intended to ask you if you couldn't possibly make some other disposal of the dress.

MME. LABLANCHE. If Madame had only told me two or three days ago.

GIULIA. I admit I ought to have done so, but it slipped my mind. However, to return to our business. I couldn't even manage at this late hour to take the dress away with me. I did not expect it so soon.

MME. LABLANCHE. Yes, but as I would not have found Madame here later —

GIULIA. Very well, you will send it to me then.

MME. LABLANCHE. As Madame pleases. [*To the* GIRL] You may go. [*The* GIRL *starts to go away, leaving the box*] No, take it. [*The* GIRL *goes out with the box*]

GIULIA. I will send you the address.

MME. LABLANCHE. There is another small account.

GIULIA. Send it to me along with the dress.

MME. LABLANCHE. I am very sorry to have to insist, but I cannot possibly wait.

[NENNELE *goes out resolutely through the door in the rear of the dining-room*]

GIULIA. At such a — time —

MME. LABLANCHE. It is not a large sum; thirteen hundred *lire*.

GIULIA. But we are just on the point of leaving! It's an unheard-of thing! Besides, it's a quarterly account. And I have never caused you to lose a penny.

MME. LABLANCHE. That is perfectly true; but I should not like to begin now. Madame is quite aware that she is not going away on a pleasure trip or for a visit to the country. Madame's husband has had a meeting of his creditors. If I had known of it in time I should have been present. I knew nothing about it, however, until last evening. I am a business woman. I have a family. I must look after my own interests. If Madame prefers that I should apply to her husband —

GIULIA. No, no, no.

MME. LABLANCHE. A little embarrassment soon passes off.

GIULIA. No, no. [*Goes toward her own room, then comes back and goes to* TOMMY'S *door*] Tommy, may I come in?

TOMMY [*from his room*]. Just a minute. I'll be out right away.

GIULIA [*to* MME. LABLANCHE]. Suppose we make it a thousand — if you keep the dress.

MME. LABLANCHE. Eleven hundred then.

GIULIA. A hundred off for cash.

MME. LABLANCHE. But I have already taken off a hundred.

GIULIA. I will give you a thousand *lire*, not a penny more.

[TOMMY *enters*. GIULIA *takes him aside*]

GIULIA. Give me five hundred *lire*. I know you have it. It's a bill that I forgot to pass on to your father. It would be too bad to tell him about it now. It's for a thousand *lire*. I have the other five hundred.

TOMMY. Haven't you any more?

GIULIA. It's all I can do to scrape up the five hundred.

TOMMY [*smiling incredulously*]. Mamma!

GIULIA. Where should I get money? Don't leave me in this awkward position.

TOMMY. I wager that you have a nice little pile laid aside somewhere.

GIULIA. No, as true as I'm standing here. Be a good fellow now; let me have it.

TOMMY. Get out your own five hundred.

GIULIA. Oh, thanks; I'll go and get it.

[*She runs to her room*]

[TOMMY *whistles softly under his breath, shifting from one foot to the other. Then looks at* MME. LABLANCHE]

TOMMY. Um — well dressed. [*Takes out a cigarette and lights it*] Is it you who make the dresses of La Ricchetti?

MME. LABLANCHE. The singer? Yes, sir.

TOMMY. I congratulate you. Last night she had on a flower costume that was a dream.

MME. LABLANCHE. Of mauve silk?

TOMMY. That's the one.

MME. LABLANCHE. She is such a beautiful creature!

TOMMY. Eighteen inches around the waist.

MME. LABLANCHE. One might think that you helped her to dress.

TOMMY. I? Not at all. In fact — quite the contrary.

[GIULIA *returns a little embarrassed with a bill for a thousand lire which she tries to hide*]

GIULIA [*to* TOMMY]. Here, give it to me.

TOMMY. Oh, you'll have to give me change. I've nothing smaller than a thousand.

GIULIA [*annoyed*]. No?

TOMMY. It's true. And I don't trust my stepmother. Give me the change and here you are.

GIULIA [*embarrassed*]. The fact is — I can't —

TOMMY [*smiling*]. You too? Oh, you miser! You have a bill for a thousand, too? As I'm alive! Well, then, pay with yours now. As soon as I've broken mine I'll give you my half.

GIULIA. On your word of honor?

TOMMY. On my word as a gentleman.

GIULIA [*to* MME. LABLANCHE]. Here is the money, Mme. Lablanche.

MME. LABLANCHE. Thank you. Where may I write the receipt?

GIULIA [*looking around at the bare furniture*]. There seems to be no place.

TOMMY. Here, on the pier table.

MME. LABLANCHE [*writes the receipt and then hands it to* GIULIA]. Here it is, Madame. I have done as you wished.

GIOVANNI [*entering from the outside, to* MME. LABLANCHE]. I beg your pardon if I have kept you waiting. You have a bill for me?

MME. LABLANCHE. I have just signed the receipt.

GIOVANNI. Ah, very well.

MME. LABLANCHE. A pleasant journey, Madame.

GIULIA. Till I see you again.

[MME. LABLANCHE *goes out*]

GIOVANNI [*to* GIULIA]. Yesterday you asked me for eighty *lire* to buy paints with. I begged you not to spend any more money. I told you that my money was all accounted for. You insisted and swore to me that you didn't have a penny. I was so humiliated! But you kept on insisting until I gave you the money.

TOMMY [*aside*]. Hello!

GIOVANNI. How much did that bill amount to?

GIULIA. Oh, it was very small.

GIOVANNI. Let me see it.

GIULIA. I asked Tommy and he let me have the money. I didn't want to disturb you for a trifle.

GIOVANNI. Let me see it. [*Takes the bill and reads it; to* TOMMY] You paid a thousand *lire?*

TOMMY. Half of it! Half of it!

GIOVANNI. So you've got money too.

TOMMY. Was it wrong of me to pay it?

GIOVANNI. Quite the contrary. — The money that my wife has in her possession she has had from me. She has got it by saving on her household expenses. I am sorry to have to deprive her of it, but it really belongs to the house and not to her. You, however, have had nothing from me. I foresaw this failure two months ago. For some time I had been thoroughly disgusted with your idle life and my purse was closed to you. Therefore, it was your own money, and I am glad to be able to repay you.

TOMMY. Oh, father.

GIOVANNI. I want you to take it. [*He lays a bill on the table*] And if it hurts you to take it, it will have served a good purpose. Keep it. Who knows but perhaps some day! —

TOMMY. I've had luck at cards. I won twelve thousand *lire* last month.

GIOVANNI. I know it. While I was struggling with the terror of failure, you were passing your nights in the gambling-houses.

TOMMY. In the gambling-houses? At the club!

GIOVANNI. You won eight thousand *lire* in a single night. I was informed of it the next morning. It was the very day I called together my creditors. I sent for you to come to my study. I explained to you the state of my affairs. I didn't want to begin by reproaching you — I didn't want to show you that I knew. I hoped for a generous impulse from you. You didn't say a word. Then my heart seemed to freeze within me. As you are not stingy, I know what you think: you think I haven't made an honest accounting. [*Silence, then a change of tone*] I expect Massimo at any moment. He was to arrive this morning, and he will travel with us. I know that he is not in your good graces, nor in Nennele's. I have already told Nennele what I expect of her; and I tell you, sir, not to give yourself any airs.

TOMMY. As if I had ever —

GIOVANNI. Massimo is a close relative, and he is the only person who has come to my aid in this misfortune. I had not seen him for years while he spent his life travelling about the world in connection with his work. I did not appeal to him; he came forward of his own accord. But for him, let it be said as an example to you, Tommy, I don't know what would have become of us. — Another thing. We will go by way of Modane because the railroad has given me a pass, as a former director, and so we must go as far as possible by the Italian road. For the same reason, from here to Modane we will travel first class. But I warn you that after we pass Modane the second will have to do. [*To* TOMMY] I am sorry for your knickerbockers, but that fine suit is about to see some hard wear and ought to be broken in. We leave here within half an hour. I ask you to be ready on time.

TOMMY. Have you finished? Do you know that you have talked to me as if I were a personal enemy?

GIOVANNI [*impetuously takes* TOMMY'S *head between his hands and kisses him on the brow, restraining a sob*] I have seen you grow up in this house. Don't let us break down. Keep your nerve! Keep your nerve! [*He goes hastily to his room, then reappears*] Has my sister come yet?

TOMMY. Aunt Irene? No.

GIOVANNI. When she comes call me at once. [*He goes out*]

GIULIA. We must make allowances for him, because his head isn't all it should be. If he had followed my advice, we should never have got into this fix.

TOMMY. Your advice?

GIULIA. Oh, I know something about money matters. I wanted at least to spare him this expense to-day.

TOMMY. Yes, you would have spared him — now and forever. If Mme. Lablanche hadn't put in an appearance, she would never have seen her money.

GIULIA. She has had enough out of me already! — Remember that the money is still there on the table.

TOMMY. You know perfectly well that it isn't *my* money. I took the scolding for your sake.

GIULIA [*taking the bill*]. What I mean is, that you don't owe me anything now. — What were you thinking now? — I will keep it for all of us. It will be there when you need it.

TOMMY. I'd hate to have to depend on it.

GIULIA. So you won twelve thousand *lire*. You told me six the other day.

TOMMY. And on the strength of that six you got five hundred out of me. If I had told you twelve you would have asked me for a thousand. And besides,

the greater part of it is gone already. I had some debts of my own to pay.

GIULIA. Shame on you!

TOMMY. Shame on me for having paid my debts?

GIULIA. For having gambled.

TOMMY. Just what I expected. Moralizing is cheap.

[NENNELE *enters from the back of the dining-room*]

GIULIA. Come here, come here! Was it you who went and called your father, eh?

NENNELE. Yes.

GIULIA. A pretty state of affairs! You've taken to spying on me!

TOMMY [*placing himself between them; to* NENNELE]. Don't answer her.

[LUCIA *enters from the outer door with a note and hands it to* GIULIA, *who takes it, opens it, and reads it eagerly*]

TOMMY [*in the meantime, to* NENNELE]. You mustn't think that I'm not on your side. I may be a poor specimen, but —

NENNELE. Why do you talk like that?

TOMMY. Because it's the truth.

GIULIA [*to* LUCIA]. Did you deliver my notes yourself?

LUCIA. Count Filippo was still in bed. I gave his to the maid. I met Signor Sarzana on the steps, and he told me that he would be at the station. Don Michele came out to the anteroom himself to give me this note. He asked what time we intended to leave. He will be at the station, too.

GIULIA. They will bring flowers.

LUCIA. The flowers are here already. The valet came with me.

GIULIA. Then go and fetch them.

[LUCIA *goes out;* GIULIA *reads the note a second time*]

TOMMY [*softly to* NENNELE]. The one thing lacking — flowers for the departure.

NENNELE [*softly to* TOMMY]. And for such a departure!

[LUCIA *returns with the flowers*]

GIULIA [*taking them*]. Oh, lovely, lovely!

NENNELE. Mamma, is everything in your room ready to be locked up?

GIULIA. Yes, I was just waiting for Lucia. [*Gives the flowers to* NENNELE] Here, put them back so that they won't wither. [NENNELE *throws them on the sofa*] What do you mean by that?

NENNELE. Where did you want me to put them?

GIULIA [*looks at her; then to* LUCIA]. Come with me.

LUCIA [*approaching* NENNELE *affectionately*]. It's too bad —

GIULIA. Come along.

[*Enters her room with* LUCIA]

NENNELE. Think of her putting her mind on things like that at such a time.

TOMMY. Oh, we won't die because we're going to Switzerland.

ANDREA [*from the outer door*]. May I send Gaspare with the baggage to check it?

TOMMY. How about my baggage?

ANDREA. Gaspare had it taken down by the back stairs.

NENNELE. Then he can go.

ANDREA. The young gentleman you were expecting has arrived — your cousin.

NENNELE. Massimo? Where is he?

ANDREA. I just saw him from the window crossing the garden.

NENNELE. Is the carriage here already?

ANDREA. They are just harnessing the horses.

MASSIMO [*from the outer door*]. Good morning.

[ANDREA *goes out*]

NENNELE. Oh, Massimo, when did you get here?

MASSIMO. This morning at six, straight from Buda-Pesth. Good morning, Tommaso.

TOMMY. Good old Massimo!

MASSIMO. Are you going too?

TOMMY. Wasn't that understood?

MASSIMO. When I went away ten days ago, uncle was still uncertain whether he should come alone or bring you with him. But on seeing the baggage I presume that you were all going.

NENNELE. Too many, eh?

MASSIMO. Not at all! The more the merrier. And uncle?

TOMMY. I will call him. [*Goes to* GIOVANNI'S *room*] Father, Massimo is here.

MASSIMO [*to* NENNELE]. And how is he keeping up? More like himself again?

NENNELE. He's very calm.

MASSIMO. And you? Are you sorry that you are going away?

NENNELE. I can scarcely wait for the moment to leave.

MASSIMO. That 's no answer. Are you really sorry?

NENNELE. I should not like to stay.

MASSIMO. Another answer that isn't an answer. But we'll get acquainted in time. We are first cousins; we call each other by our first names; I like you both very much. But since we were born we have been together about two hours in all, a week or so ago.

TOMMY. I remember having seen you when you were twelve years old. You were a long, lanky chap like a beanpole. I was about ten and Nennele five.

MASSIMO. I don't remember Irene at all.

NENNELE. Nor I you.

MASSIMO. Naturally. But I remember you, Tommaso. I detested you because you had a nicer tie than I.

NENNELE [*looking at him*]. To-day you take your revenge.

MASSIMO. In the matter of my tie? I fear that my tie is not at all to your taste.

NENNELE. Why? It goes with all the rest of your suit.

MASSIMO. That means that you disapprove of my whole outfit. But I shan't change it.

TOMMY. It would be a great pity if you did.

GIOVANNI [*comes from his room*]. Massimo!

MASSIMO. Glad to see you, uncle.

[*They shake hands*]

GIOVANNI. It makes me feel much better to know that you are here with me. [*To* NENNELE *and* TOMMY] Will you children be ready in plenty of time?

TOMMY. Ready and waiting.

GIOVANNI [*to* NENNELE]. Go and find mamma. [NENNELE *goes to* GIULIA'S *room; to* TOMMY] And you, go through the house and see that all the rooms are properly closed. Don't lose any time.

[*Exit* TOMMY]

GIOVANNI. Did you wind up your affairs at Buda-Pesth?

MASSIMO. Very well indeed. I resigned the contract, but with profit.

GIOVANNI. I am very sorry that on my account —

MASSIMO. Better stick to one piece of work than fly like a shuttle between a dozen. — You have compromised with your creditors. I got your telegram.

GIOVANNI. The deficit is eight hundred thousand *lire*. I give up this house, for which I have already had an offer of three hundred and seventy thousand *lire*. The stables, the carriage-house, the furniture, including the tapestries and the library, were appraised at eighty thousand, and the country house at Brianza, that cost me more than half a million, at a hundred thousand. The creditors will take seventy per cent. I keep nothing. I know that Lauri, who was my principal creditor, was so astonished at my remarkable simplicity that he called me an idiot, openly, on the floor of the Exchange. And another, also a friend of mine and a satisfied creditor, a polished gentleman, speaking of the stubborn industry of my whole life and of my equally stubborn honesty, called me with equal frankness a headstrong mule.

MASSIMO. Refined wit!

GIOVANNI. These are the returns that I have got from the public. At home —

MASSIMO. Exactly. — Your brother-in-law?

GIOVANNI. Oh, I'm not speaking of him. My brother-in-law, when things were well adjusted, sent my sister to me —

MASSIMO. Aunt Irene. I remember her.

GIOVANNI. To bring me ten thousand *lire*.

MASSIMO [*with a grimace*]. He's several times a millionaire, isn't he?

GIOVANNI. His fortune is estimated at seven million.

MASSIMO. It's undoubtedly all of that.

GIOVANNI. He considers that he has done his whole duty. On the other hand, my sister told me yesterday that she intended to come this morning especially to see Nennele, who is her god-daughter. And she made a great point of saying it. I think that she may give the child a handsome present.

MASSIMO. Didn't she offer to keep your family with her until things were in some sort of shape?

GIOVANNI. Yes. And I almost accepted her offer in order to get more time to look for a house. But since —

MASSIMO. The house is found — that is, if it suits you. My first assistant wired me about it day before yesterday. It's a Swiss peasant chalet, but one that was formerly the country house of well-to-do people. Two floors, six rooms on each floor. A delightful spot outside of the city; a big lawn in front. The owner has bought a farm in the neighborhood and has gone to live

there. My assistant has the refusal of it for six hundred *lire* a year. I will retain two rooms on the ground floor to be used as your office, and for them I will pay a hundred *lire*. That leaves five hundred as your share. What do you think of it?

GIOVANNI. The very thing.

MASSIMO. You understand that I'm not trying to induce you to leave your family here. Of course, it will be a comfort to you to have them with you from the first.

GIOVANNI. Oh, it isn't that. [*Pause; then sadly*] Do you know why I don't leave them here? I don't — trust them.

MASSIMO. Whom do you not trust?

GIOVANNI. My own family. If you only knew the things that I have seen in my house since the failure! My wife seems to you frivolous and giddy, eh?

MASSIMO. Have I ever intimated —?

GIOVANNI. She brought a lawyer into the house to persuade me to defraud my creditors. She proposed to me to forge deeds — put the property in someone else's name. — She wanted to sell these tapestries secretly. And when I told her that that would mean fraudulent bankruptcy, criminal prosecution, prison, do you know what she answered? She answered: "There will be no time for such things. We will be gone!"

MASSIMO. Well, well!

GIOVANNI. And my son — he believes that what Giulia proposed to me to do has already been done. Oh, he doesn't know and doesn't judge, you understand. And you may be sure he would never have advised me to do it. But in a vague way he takes it for granted that there is some money laid aside; and he is quite satisfied that it should be so. And it isn't the insult to myself which that implies — what does it matter? It's that it indicates what sort of stuff he's made of — that it is a warning of what is to come.

MASSIMO. Oh, you and I will take care of the future.

GIOVANNI. You perhaps. — But I! I have ruined them.

MASSIMO. My father left me without a penny when I was fourteen years old, and I'm grateful to him for it.

GIOVANNI. I have no authority. I'm nothing but a draught horse to do the work. You can't imagine the effort that it has cost me to be severe during these days. It can't last. I have never exercised authority; I never saw the need of it. Wealth softens and beautifies everything so! I'm a bad father, Massimo.

MASSIMO. Fresh air and fresh fields! You'll see what a difference they will make.

TOMMY [*from the anteroom*]. Why, no — come to be sure. We'll all be so pleased to see you.

GIOVANNI. And now we have to go through with the leave-takings!

TOMMY [*enters with* SIGNORA LAURI]. Father, Signora Lauri.

SIGNORA LAURI. Just a moment — for a last good-bye!

GIOVANNI. I thank you.

TOMMY [*at* GIULIA'S *door*]. Mamma! Nannele!

SIGNORA LAURI. Don't ask me to talk. Don't ask me to talk! It's so painful! I am losing my best friends. What a thing it is! Those who go away don't mind the parting — but those who stay! I didn't close my eyes all last night. [GIULIA *enters*] Giulia, darling! Just two minutes: time to embrace you.

[*Embraces her*]

GIULIA. How good you are!

SIGNORA LAURI. And Nennele? [NENNELE *enters with* LUCIA] Here she is. My love! [*Embraces her*] No words can say what I am losing!

TOMMY. How about me? Have you forgotten that I'm going too?

SIGNORA LAURI. My hand to you — or rather, both my hands.

[TOMMY *kisses her hands one after the other*]

GIOVANNI [*on the opposite side of the stage; to* MASSIMO]. Look at them. Look at my wife. Look at my son. Do they seem to understand the position they are in? You don't know! You don't know!

[*He is seated on the sofa, his elbows on his knees, and his head in his hands*]

SIGNORA LAURI. Will you pass through St. Gotthard?

GIULIA. No, through Modane.

SIGNORA LAURI. That's too bad. St. Gotthard is *so* picturesque. [*To* NENNELE] Have you ever been in Switzerland?

NENNELE. Never.

MASSIMO [*looks at* GIOVANNI *sympathetically*]. Keep up your courage, uncle.

GIOVANNI. You can't understand. didn't understand either. It's my ault. But prosperity blinds one. Ah, race, elegance, breeding, how they over up things. You'll see, Massimo. To leave them here would mean that hey would follow along the easy path of doubtful pleasures. No, no. They must go with me. And even that may not help.

MASSIMO. Don't talk like that.

GIOVANNI. You'll see. They are people who can't resist the storm. They have no stamina. At the first puff of wind they're gone — they're gone!

[ANDREA *enters*]

ANDREA [*to* GIOVANNI]. The carriage is ready.

GIOVANNI [*rising*]. It's time to go. [*To* MASSIMO] She didn't come after all.

[*All get up, put on overcoats and look for umbrellas, canes, etc.*]

SIGNORA LAURI. We will come and see you.

TOMMY. Make it a promise. Console the exiles.

SIGNORA LAURI [*to* GIOVANNI]. To you I say only one thing. You're a naughty man to take them away from me.

GIULIA. My flowers! Where are my flowers?

[LUCIA *hands* NENNELE *her hat and travelling coat*]

NENNELE. How good you are to wait on me, dear Lucia!

[LUCIA *tries to kiss her hand, weeping*]

NENNELE. Hush, hush!

IRENE [*enters from the outer door*]. Ah, thank heaven, you're still here!

GIOVANNI. My sister!

IRENE. I was afraid I wouldn't get here in time. I would have gone to the station — but I knew that my feelings would be too much for me. My husband will be there. Nennele, I brought you a little chocolate to eat on the train.

MASSIMO. Just look! What a treat! Thank her — thank your aunt. Dear aunt!

IRENE [*taken aback*]. Who is this? Who is this?

GIOVANNI. It's Massimo, our nephew.

IRENE. Ah, how you have grown!

MASSIMO. Since when?

GIOVANNI. We must hurry.

NENNELE. Good-bye, aunt.

IRENE. I'm coming, I'm coming; I'll go down-stairs with you.

SIGNORA LAURI. You will soon come back — my heart tells me so.

[*They go out chattering through the outer door.* GIOVANNI *watches them as they go*]

MASSIMO [*to* GIOVANNI]. Don't be afraid. They'll make a fresh start.

GIOVANNI. Let us hope so.

[*All go out.* LUCIA *remains alone and throws herself sobbing into an armchair.* NENNELE *runs back into the room, takes* LUCIA *in her arms and kisses her several times*]

LUCIA. Nennele, Nennele!

NENNELE. Hush, hush, hush!

[*She runs out*]

ACT II

A room plainly but comfortably and tastefully furnished. A low, panelled ceiling and wainscoted walls. In the wall to the left of the audience, a large window rather wider than it is high. The Venetian blinds must be arranged so that they may be opened and closed. Outside, trees close to the window. In the back, two doors. The one at the left leads to a small anteroom and thence to the stairway. It is the entrance door. The door at the right leads to GIULIA'S *room. Between these doors, against the wall, a wooden sideboard with dishes on it. In the wall near the front, to the right of the audience, the door which leads to* NENNELE'S *room. Between this and the back, a little table placed against the wall. In the middle of the room a round table covered with a cloth. A reclining chair of carved wood near the window. Other wooden chairs.*

NENNELE, *seated at the table in the middle of the room, is reading.* TOMMY, *astride a chair near the window, is smoking a short, wooden pipe of English make.* GIOVANNI *enters from the outer door.*

GIOVANNI. Nennele.

NENNELE. Yes, father?

GIOVANNI. You asked me for some money last evening, and I told you to remind me of it this morning.

NENNELE. Yes, but I didn't like to.

GIOVANNI. Why not? I thought of it just now and came up to bring it to you.

[*He hands her some money*]

NENNELE. It's too much.

GIOVANNI. A hundred *lire*. That will be enough to last you until the end of the month.

NENNELE. I would rather have less at a time.

GIOVANNI. Is it such a large sum?

NENNELE. No, but — out of the last that you gave me I lost track of thirty *lire*.

GIOVANNI. You lost track —?

NENNELE. According to my accounts I ought to have thirty *lire* left, and I haven't anything.

GIOVANNI. You probably forgot to put down some items.

NENNELE. I must have — although I can't think of anything. Of course, I may have lost it. Anyway I would rather ask you oftener. Take it back. I'll keep forty *lire*.

GIOVANNI. Oh, keep it, keep it all. One has to learn sometime or other. [*To* TOMMY] Bored to death, eh, poor Tommy?

TOMMY. You bet I am — with this eternal doing nothing.

GIOVANNI. We must have patience.

TOMMY. It's all right for you to talk; you're busy.

GIOVANNI. Something will turn up. There will be a break before long.

NENNELE. Are you going back to your office? Remember that it's four days since you have been out of the house.

GIOVANNI. I have work to do.

NENNELE. But you look so tired.

GIOVANNI. No, not tired. I have never felt so well as during the three months we've been here. — Ah, to-day is Thursday. Massimo will be here.

TOMMY [*in the tone of one who is bored by the idea*]. Yes.

GIOVANNI. Well, then, I'll walk to the station with him when he leaves this evening. Does that suit you?

NENNELE. That'll be better than nothing.

[GIOVANNI *goes out*]

TOMMY. It's plain that things haven't changed much for him. Or they've changed for the better. He used to work at Milan; he works here. No duns. Fresh country air. Goes to bed at nine o'clock. Sleeps. — What are you doing?

NENNELE. I'm studying.

TOMMY. As far as contentment goes, if I had an income of a hundred thousand *lire* and an English country house built on the site of this lugubrious old barn even I would ask nothing more of the Creator.

NENNELE. What does the house matter when we have so much beauty just outside the windows?

TOMMY. The lily needs to be painted. Nature is an imperfect artist. I'd like to see a park down there, with big shade trees — not fruit trees, mind you — and neatly mowed grass and an arbor among the tree trunks. And I could get along without seeing mamma planted in the very middle of the lawn, on her ignoble camp-stool, with her easel in front of her, intent on maligning nature with her misguided paint brush.

NENNELE. Is she still painting?

TOMMY. Undaunted! At this moment she has just put her fiftieth cotton Mont Blanc to soak in her fiftieth lake of bluing water.

NENNELE. Is she alone?

TOMMY. What a question! She is with her two brother artists — very revered masters! Great crimes are never committed without accomplices. But Mont Blanc lets them go on and doesn't seem worried. Look at them. They look as if they were moved by springs, all three of them. They lift up their heads like little sparrows waiting for a worm. With their eyes they gobble up their share of the landscape, and then they scramble to make it unrecognizable on canvas. Have you ever had a close look at those two?

NENNELE. At one of them — the old one. He comes here sometimes.

TOMMY. The other two send him. From time to time our ingenious stepmother remembers that she has forgotten a tube of paint, a brush, a fan. And the old one always trots to the house for it. On no account does the younger one ever budge from her side. And then the picturesque trio changes into a sentimental duet.

NENNELE. How bitter you are! What's the matter with you?

TOMMY. Nothing.

NENNELE. Well, then, why are you so disgusted?

TOMMY. When did you miss that money?

NENNELE. What money?

TOMMY. The thirty *lire* that you can't account for.

NENNELE. Day before yesterday.

TOMMY. Where do you keep it?

NENNELE. In the drawer of the little table.

TOMMY. Don't think for a moment that I'm asking for my personal benefit.

NENNELE. Oh, Tommy!

TOMMY [*after slight hesitation*]. If the worst came to the worst, I'd ask you for some.

NENNELE. Do you need some?

TOMMY. Poor Nennele!

NENNELE. But you've always had money of your own.

TOMMY. That time is gone — gone recently, but none the less gone.

NENNELE. I can't give you much. Do you want some? I will be economical with the rest.

[*Goes to open the drawer*]

TOMMY [*overcoming the temptation*]. Close it up, close it up. And always keep it locked. You shouldn't lead people into temptation. Artistic temperaments are notoriously weak.

[*Nods in the direction of the window*]

NENNELE. You shouldn't think ill of people. Are you convinced by this time that father didn't put any money aside after the failure?

TOMMY. Yes, I should say I am!

NENNELE. Are you sorry?

TOMMY. Can you ask?

NENNELE. And now listen to me.

TOMMY. Listen to what?

NENNELE. To see if I've learned my lesson. Take this. [*Gives him a book*] Follow with your eyes without asking questions. It begins here. The article.

TOMMY. The article! You're studying that stuff?

NENNELE. I have to teach it and I don't know it myself.

TOMMY. Don't you know what the article is?

NENNELE. Well, go ahead, then, and tell me yourself.

TOMMY. La, il.

NENNELE. You know that those words are articles. But you couldn't tell me clearly and concisely what an article is. Perhaps, by accident, you could even do that. But how about the adverb and the interjection and all that?

TOMMY. Let's see.

NENNELE. The article is a little word which may be declined.

TOMMY. Which is declinable, the book says.

NENNELE. But I'm not merely reciting the lesson. I don't want to say it word for word; I want to be sure that I know the meaning. It is a word which may be declined, and which, placed before a noun, indicates, determines, shows whether that noun is masculine or feminine, singular or plural. For example, *il pero* and *la mela*. *Il* is the article of masculine sex because *pero* is masculine.

[MASSIMO *enters from the rear, puts down a little basket on the nearest chair, and stands listening, unseen by the other two*]

NENNELE [*continuing*]. And *la* is the article of feminine sex.

TOMMY. It doesn't say sex, it says gender. Sex is not a nice word.

NENNELE. Of feminine gender.

MASSIMO. What the deuce are you two doing?

NENNELE. Oh, were you there all the time? I'm studying grammar so that I can teach English.

MASSIMO. Are you going to teach it in Italian?

NENNELE. No, in French.

MASSIMO. And in order to teach English in French, you're studying Italian grammar?

NENNELE. Because I can speak all right, you know; but I lack the elements. Of course there are some things that are the same in all languages. Don't you understand?

MASSIMO. I'm afraid I don't.

NENNELE. I cut an awful figure the other day at that English lesson you arranged for me — the son of the widow Rouillet.

MASSIMO. You went?

NENNELE. I couldn't believe that I was really earning my own living.

MASSIMO. A living is a great deal.

NENNELE. The place is impossible — the street, the house, the stairs, the rooms — a regular limbo as pictured by the holy fathers. And besides that, it's at the other end of nowhere. And it was raining in torrents — pools of water everywhere. It was a good thing that Tommy went with me.

MASSIMO. So that you could both have a bath?

NENNELE. He got me a cab.

TOMMY. Don't admit such extravagance to Massimo. It hurts him.

MASSIMO. Quite the contrary. What are cabs for, anyway?

NENNELE. We get there. Tommy says good-bye to me. I go up the steps,

holding blindly by the rail, my heart in my mouth. I ring the bell. The widow herself comes to let me in.

MASSIMO. Why do you harp so much on that *widow*? She didn't kill her husband.

NENNELE. She's the widow type — born that way.

TOMMY [*in an exaggerated tone of reproof*]. Nennele, a lady who employs you!

MASSIMO [*looks at him; then to* NENNELE]. Go on.

NENNELE. The wid — excuse me — the lady, leads me into a sort of general living-room where they also eat — for it smelled of cabbage — and begins to look me over from head to foot. And such a look! Then she asks me my age.

MASSIMO. Umm — !

NENNELE. Why?

MASSIMO. I made you out older than you are. I thought your youth might prove an objection.

NENNELE. Fine! Only you should have let me know. We had quite a disagreement about it. She said that I was twenty-six and I insisted that I was only twenty-two. — But to make a long story short: she called her son.

TOMMY. The orphan.

NENNELE. Who answers to the name of Gastone. And Gastone appears — an overgrown youth with a cold in his head, sixteen years old. I open my Ollendorf on the table to begin. And the mother sits down beside the son and stares me in the face as if her chief aim in life were to addle my brains. I begin by repeating a maxim in French, translating it into English, and asking Gastone to say it after me. But the mother! The mother wanted grammar, rules, definitions. A regular inquisition! I was suddenly forced to gaze into the awful abyss of my ignorance. Do you know what kept me from running away? The thought of the long, dark stairs which I couldn't run down. There was nothing to do but to let her talk and follow along boldly: The penknife of my teacher, the hat of my aunt, the umbrella of my neighbor —

[*The old* ARTIST *enters from the rear without being seen. He is quite an old man with long hair, whose looks bear out the romantic conception of an artist*]

ARTIST [*speaking almost in syllables*]. Pardon me. The umbrella of the lady.

NENNELE. Eh?

[*Turns around dazed*]

TOMMY [*does the same*]. Our friend, the painter!

[NENNELE *breaks into a laugh and is followed by* TOMMY *and* MASSIMO]

ARTIST. I beg your pardon. Perhaps I have made a mistake. I asked for the umbrella of the lady.

NENNELE [*still laughing*]. You mean mamma's parasol. Tommy — wait, wait; I'll go and get it.

[*Goes out to the right*]

TOMMY [*to the artist*]. Please excuse us. As you came in, you happened to repeat —

ARTIST. No offence, no offence. I understand. But the lady sent me. The sun is so strong.

NENNELE [*returning with the parasol and giving it to the* ARTIST]. Here it is.

ARTIST. Young lady, I thank you. Gentlemen!

[*Bows and goes out*]

MASSIMO. Who is he?

TOMMY. He is one of mamma's artists, a Norwegian. Mamma has dug up two of them at the Art Club and now they all paint together.

MASSIMO. The same picture — all of them?

TOMMY. I regret to say that they are not so merciful. They are perpetrating three pictures. They are all three working from nature, copying Mont Blanc, but each one makes his own. Don't you like the idea?

MASSIMO. I'm no judge of such things.

TOMMY. You appear to disapprove. Mamma is doing it for lucre, you know. It will mean a great boost for the family exchequer.

MASSIMO. Does she sell her pictures?

TOMMY. That's another matter. She *would* sell them.

MASSIMO [*to* NENNELE]. How many lessons have you given?

NENNELE. Only one. I should have given the second yesterday, but I wrote that I wasn't feeling well.

TOMMY. You may as well add that you wrote at my advice, and also that I dictated the letter. It's the truth. If Massimo disapproves, he will at least know whom to blame.

MASSIMO. Massimo does disapprove, but he doesn't blame anybody. It was to be expected —

NENNELE. Of such good-for-nothings —

MASSIMO. Look here, I didn't intend to say anything of the sort. It was to be expected that you would find the work hard and disagreeable at the first attempt, and become discouraged. It always happens. As for Madame Rouillet, if she was not born a widow, as you say, she became one after eight months of marriage, when her husband, a civil engineer, was killed by a landslide in a mine into which he had gone with a rescue party after an explosion of fire-damp. The widow lives upon a tiny pension which obliges her to eat cabbage rather than truffles — which, by the way, are not particularly fragrant either. The son is burdened with a high-sounding name because names are given to people in those early days when we are all about equally beautiful or ugly. If I ever have any sons, I shall give them good, plain names both to guard against ludicrous discrepancies later on and because I am personally inclined to find poetry in prosaic things. But, of course, I can't expect everybody to be of my turn of mind. As to that question about your age, I explained it to you. In houses where they have no reception room, it is natural that the mother should remain in the living-room, especially if her son is learning English from a young and beautiful Italian lady. And finally, she wanted grammar because in her young days languages were studied in that way and it is the only way she knows.

TOMMY. Put that in your pipe and smoke it.

NENNELE. And I don't know any grammar!

MASSIMO. Oh, Lord!

NENNELE. It's true. I never studied it. I was passed along from a Tuscan nurse to an English governess and from her to a German.

MASSIMO. You did things in a ladylike way — without hurting yourself with work.

NENNELE. And the result is that I'm an ignoramus.

MASSIMO. Keep up the lessons and you'll get along all right.

TOMMY. Why, yes. Two lessons a week, at three *lire* a lesson, makes in all six *lire* a week and twenty-four *lire* a month. Almost the wages of a cook!

MASSIMO. Less, less. If you deduct *lire* and a half for a cab every time, you will have twelve *lire* a month left — almost the pay of many a workgirl who has to walk even when it rains.

TOMMY. Boom!

MASSIMO. What do you mean?

TOMMY. Nothing. Boom. A cannonade.

MASSIMO. And you are satisfied to go on living at your father's expense?

TOMMY. I have never done anything else since I was born and I have always enjoyed public respect.

MASSIMO. Respect?

TOMMY. Yes, sir. And if you want me to talk seriously, I will tell you the reason. Man does not live by bread alone.

MASSIMO. Please explain the nature of the sauce that you supply.

TOMMY. There are in the world some few people whose task it is to guard pure intellect; that is, to refine the sensations, to preserve elegant traditions —

MASSIMO. Watchers at the sepulchre!

TOMMY. In a word, to incarnate beauty.

MASSIMO. Oh, Lord! And do you consider yourself consecrated to that sacred mission?

TOMMY. I did when I was rich.

MASSIMO. So that if you and your kind did not exist, this poor world would — Oh, but beauty is within us. And it is more in me than in you. In me it is more whole-souled and more pure. To me that lake is beautiful at any time and whatever my circumstances happen to be. But if you are to enjoy it, you must have slept in a good bed, be well dressed and lounging in an armchair with a cigar in your mouth. Your beauty, then, is, to a large extent, manufactured by the upholsterer, the tailor, the furniture dealer and the importer of tobacco. [*To* NENNELE] Take my advice: go on with your lessons.

TOMMY. Take mine; don't.

NENNELE. Tommy.

TOMMY [*to* MASSIMO]. It's time to put an end to this edifying Arcadia that you have been trying to force us into. If my sister can find suitable work, well and good. I want to work too. Don't smile because I left your employ. A nice job it was you gave me — boss of a bunch of laborers boring a hole in a mountain covered with ice! A quick and convenient way to send me back to

my Creator! Outside, a thick crust of ice, and inside, darkest Africa!

MASSIMO. I stood it — for a year.

TOMMY. Oh, it's all right for you. And ninety *lire* a month!

MASSIMO. With board and lodging in my house. And at that I had to pay an extra assistant to help you and to teach you the business.

TOMMY. Damp, muggy air. Naked, sweating men. For all the world like the pictures we see in the illustrated newspapers. In ten days I wore out three suits.

MASSIMO. Well, of course, if you would insist on dressing in white —

TOMMY. Was I expected to change even my manner of dressing? Fine business! [*Returns and sits down near the window*] Both of us want some occupation that is suitable to — to —

MASSIMO. To what?

TOMMY. To our tastes and abilities.

MASSIMO. You've already found yours. An English pipe, some good tobacco, a seat near the window, and you're suitably employed.

NENNELE. I can't let you speak like that to my brother.

MASSIMO. Is your father downstairs?

NENNELE. Yes.

MASSIMO. I'll go down and see him.

[*He goes toward the door. On the threshold he meets* MARTA *accompanied by an elegantly liveried little* GROOM *who holds a letter in his hand.* MARTA *goes out again quickly. The* GROOM *says a few words which* MASSIMO *cannot hear*]

MASSIMO. What? Young Rosani? There he is. Here, Tommaso — here's work for you.

[TOMMY *goes up, takes the note and reads it*]

MASSIMO. Irene —

NENNELE. I've told you before that I'm called Nennele.

MASSIMO. Pardon me. Your name is Irene, just as your brother's is Tommaso. I didn't give you the names, but now that you have them I don't like to call you by any others. I detest pet names. I wanted to tell you that there are six trout in that basket, caught last night at Chamonix. They are beauties. I'll take lunch with you.

[*He goes out*]

[TOMMY *has read the note and goes to the table to write. He tears up a first sheet and begins another with a movement of his head that indicates perplexity*]

NENNELE [*has in the meantime taken up the basket; she calls from the outer door*]. Marta. [*She looks at the* GROOM *with a diffident air*]

[MARTA *enters. She is a peasant woman, dressed very plainly*]

NENNELE. Take these — some trout for lunch.

[MARTA *goes out with the basket. To* TOMMY *has finished writing and calls the* GROOM]

TOMMY. Come here.

[*He leads him toward the window and speaks to him in a low tone. The* GROOM *replies in the same tone.* NENNELE *is about to go out at the right*]

TOMMY. Won't you stay?

NENNELE. No, dear; I'm not inquisitive.

TOMMY [*giving the note to the* GROOM]. That's all. [*To* NENNELE] I won't be here for lunch. I'd prefer to avoid Mr. Preacher's company.

NENNELE [*incredulously*]. Is that the only reason?

TOMMY. By good luck I've been invited elsewhere. [*Silence*]

NENNELE. Remember that it's eleven o'clock, if you have to dress.

TOMMY. I'll wait till mamma comes in; I want to speak to her.

NENNELE. You? That's something new.

TOMMY. The invitation is for one o'clock, and I'll go as I am. There will be nobody but men there.

[NENNELE *says nothing*]

TOMMY. Don't you believe me?

NENNELE. No, I don't believe you.

TOMMY. All right.

[*Goes toward the right*]

NENNELE. Tommy, let us two stand by each other! Let's stand by each other! I feel so forlorn, so at the mercy of everything.

TOMMY. What is it now? What's the matter with you?

NENNELE. I don't know. At Milan the failure, even though it came so suddenly, neither dismayed nor discouraged me. You remember I went so far as to expect downright poverty. Poverty hasn't come. We haven't suffered any serious privations as far as I can see. Perhaps it's just that. I

don't know, I don't know! There seems to be something wrong about our entire life. It is as if nobody were where he belongs, as if father did not take charge of things as he should. As for mamma — you can see for yourself! And you — you who were such a good chum at Milan —

TOMMY. Have I changed?

NENNELE. No. That's just the point. You haven't changed. And here in this house, with this life, you no longer seem to fit in. It seems as if something were being desecrated. I can't make it clear to you.

TOMMY. I shall take Massimo as a model.

NENNELE [*standing near the table*]. What a horrible smell!

[*She takes up the envelope of the note brought by the* GROOM *and throws it on the floor*]

TOMMY. Hello!

NENNELE. It's only the envelope — you needn't be afraid. Here's mamma. [*Runs toward the door of her own room*] The friends you are going to lunch with have rather doubtful taste. [*She leaves*]

GIULIA [*entering and putting down an artist's portfolio*]. In the future I wish you would have the kindness not to disconcert my friends by laughing at them when they are kind enough to do me a favor.

TOMMY. I apologized to him.

GIULIA. He told me so. But he didn't understand what it was all about and came back very much embarrassed. — What nice perfume! Have you been meddling with my bottle?

TOMMY. Don't intimate anything of the kind, mamma; you do yourself an injustice.

GIULIA. Why?

TOMMY. I assure you that you do yourself an injustice.

GIULIA. Oh! [*Understands*] I saw the groom going out.

TOMMY. What groom?

GIULIA. As if everybody didn't know him! He has the handsomest livery in Geneva or anywhere around. [*Opening the artist's portfolio*] Do you want to see?

TOMMY. What?

GIULIA. The picture that I did this morning. I dashed it off at white heat. I was inspired. That Helmer Strile is a great master. The other one, the old man, doesn't count. He has a careful technique, but he sees only what's in front of his nose. He doesn't penetrate. He can't deduce. [*Showing her picture*] Look at that sky. Tell me if the air doesn't vibrate. And to think that at Milan I painted like a schoolgirl! Of course I haven't yet got Helmer's strength; but I feel that I'm going to have it. He told me so himself. Just think, he wanted to take this painting away with him! He said a wonderful thing to me. You date from today, said he, because you begin to render the occult. He has such glorious phrases! He says that painting is the penetration into the occult, that it does not appeal to the senses, but to the soul. He transfigures everything he touches. His landscapes fly. Everything has wings.

TOMMY. Come down to earth for just a second, mamma. Can you let me have a hundred *lire*?

GIULIA. What did you say?

TOMMY. I asked you if you could let me have a hundred *lire*. Seriously, I need the money.

GIULIA. But I haven't got it. What little I had saved has been frittered away — not by me, you understand. The entrance fee to the Art Club alone cost me a hundred and eighty *lire*. I might have asked your father for it, because, as a matter of fact, I didn't join for my own pleasure. I did it in order to make my name known. And besides, I had to buy a picture.

TOMMY. A picture?

GIULIA. Yes. The editor of the Art Review has a craze for painting — regular daubs! But I had to do it to get into the good graces of his Review, which is read by all the foreigners. The native Swiss, you know, won't buy my pictures. — But how about your twelve thousand *lire*?

TOMMY. I lost the last thousand yesterday. I had kept myself afloat until then. But last night I had such a run of bad luck —

GIULIA. Where? At the Orloff house?

TOMMY. Exactly. Where did you suppose?

GIULIA. Is she really a Russian?

TOMMY. Of course she is.

GIULIA. And has she really ever had a husband?

TOMMY. What a question!

GIULIA. How old is she?

TOMMY. Thirty-two.

GIULIA. They say she's forty-five;

and they say she's looking for another husband.

TOMMY. Is that what they talk about at the Club?

GIULIA. You ought not to gamble.

TOMMY. It's the only clean way for a man like me to reëstablish himself. I hate to insist — but give me the hundred *lire*.

GIULIA. I haven't got it, I tell you. Perhaps to-morrow.

TOMMY. Why to-morrow and not to-day?

GIULIA. There may be a chance to-morrow. But your father isn't willing, and neither is Nennele, who really rules in this house.

TOMMY. What has Nennele to do with it? What chance?

GIULIA. This evening there is to be a concert at the Club to open the summer exhibition. I am exhibiting a dozen pictures. Helmer Strile has been insisting that I should go to the concert in person. He wants to introduce me to Goupil, the famous Parisian picture dealer who is passing through Geneva.

TOMMY. He's crazy.

GIULIA. I had to tell him I couldn't go. It is a mistake, because Helmer assures me that it would help the sale of my pictures.

TOMMY. A lot of fine talk!

GIULIA. I can't see what harm there would be in it.

TOMMY. Would you go with father?

GIULIA. Oh, the poor man is always so tired in the evening.

TOMMY. Then it's out of the question.

GIULIA. On your word of honor — are you in debt?

TOMMY. No, I don't owe a cent. But I have a feeling that this would be a lucky day for me.

GIULIA. Are you going back there?

TOMMY. I'm going for lunch.

GIULIA. Does Mme. Orloff play too?

TOMMY. Never. In fact, she hates it.

GIULIA [*trying to get into* TOMMY'S *good graces*]. What an interesting face she has! She looks like one of Maestro Luca's madonnas. She often passes here in the morning, driving her two ponies. She has such a mysterious, far-off look!

TOMMY. You talk like that to get on the good side of me. How despicable all this is — all this that you and I are thinking and doing.

GIULIA. Why is it despicable?

TOMMY. Don't you see it? It means that you are better than I, for I do see it, and — [*Stretching out his hand*] Put fifty there.

GIULIA. As if the Club were not a perfectly respectable place! The whole foreign colony goes there. Helmer had offered to call for me and bring me home again. But I don't like the idea. Not that there is any harm in it, but about certain things I am excessively cautious. The old one would come too.

TOMMY. At what time is the concert?

GIULIA. From nine to midnight. Oh, I have quite given up the idea of going. I'll tell your father, so that later I won't have to reproach myself with the lost opportunity. But I won't insist. As to the money — [*Takes her purse from her pocket*] I'll give you forty *lire*.

TOMMY. And three more for the cab. I can't get there all covered with dust.

GIULIA [*giving him the money*]. There.

TOMMY. Thanks.

GIULIA. But if you win you must give me half.

TOMMY. All right.

MASSIMO [*entering*]. Hello, Tommaso. [*To* GIULIA] How are you, aunt?

GIULIA. The wild man has come down from the mountains.

MASSIMO [*to* TOMMY]. I have just been talking to your father about you. He says that you are bored with doing nothing.

TOMMY. You bet I am.

MASSIMO. So much the better. I have an idea.

TOMMY. Tell it later. Just now —

MASSIMO. No, I must tell you about it at once. If you like the idea I will try to make arrangements this very day. I am leaving again this evening. I have a friend here in Geneva who owns a big sawmill. I know he is looking for a secretary.

TOMMY. No, thank you.

GIULIA. Think of being secretary to a wood-chopper!

MASSIMO. A wood-chopper!

GIULIA. Well, chopper or splitter, it's all the same.

MASSIMO. And what is Tommaso, pray? A prince of the House of Austria?

TOMMY. I know your arguments. I have already read them in print. But I haven't time to discuss them just now. I'm going out to lunch.

MASSIMO. Oh, was the note brought by that ape an invitation?

GIULIA. Ape! If you only knew. He's Mme. Orloff's groom.

MASSIMO. Mme. Orloff's? [*To* TOMMY] Are you going to lunch with that prostitute?

TOMMY. Massimo!

MASSIMO. I used the mildest word I could. Are you going?

TOMMY. Certainly.

MASSIMO [*grasping* TOMMY *by the arm as he is about to leave*]. Stay here. Aunt, have the kindness to leave us alone for a moment. [*To* TOMMY, *who is struggling to get away*] Take care or you'll tear your clothes.

TOMMY. Let go of me.

MASSIMO. Why, yes, if you'll promise to stay here till I'm through. Aunt —

GIULIA. Don't make a scene, there's a good fellow, don't make a scene! Heavens!

MASSIMO. Please leave us alone. I have some things to say that no one else should hear.

GIULIA [*to* TOMMY]. I'll go and speak to your father.

[*She goes out by the main door*]

MASSIMO. First of all I must ask you to excuse me for my violence! but I couldn't help it. Do you know who Mme. Orloff is? You don't answer. Then I'll tell you. She is a lady who has been under the surveillance of the police.

TOMMY. Of the international political police.

MASSIMO. No. That's what she tells you — maligning the Nihilists — because the truth had got out and she had to find some means of explaining it. The so-called Orloff —

TOMMY. Why so-called? He was her husband.

MASSIMO. To be sure — and a worthy husband. Only his name was not Orloff, but Borki. Orloff is the name of a province. Signor Borki kept a house of ill fame in Odessa. After he got rich he thought it would be a good idea to change his name. When he died four years ago, leaving a hundred thousand *lire* to the Russian church of Geneva, the Odessa newspapers waxed enthusiastic over his life and his good deeds. Did you know that?

TOMMY. I warn you that you are doing everything in your power to make me go there, even though I had formerly had my doubts.

MASSIMO. Yes, that's the refuge of cowards who know they're cowards. They want to be able to say they did wrong for the sake of getting even.

TOMMY. Do you think you can lord it over us all in this house on account of the two hundred and fifty *lire* a month for which my father gives you full return in honest work?

MASSIMO. I pay your father what I should pay anybody else. I am not a philanthropist, so I have a right to speak my mind. And even if I were, I should talk in the same way, because I despise your uppish delicacies. It is not a question of tyranny; although, if need be, I should be quite capable of shutting you up in this room — twenty-seven years old as you are — and not letting you out until I was ready.

TOMMY. By what right?

MASSIMO. By the right given me by two stronger arms in the service of a saner head. If I saw you on the point of blowing out your brains, everybody would recognize my right to snatch the revolver out of your hand, even if I had to thrash you to get it. Relations with that lady would be more harmful to yourself and others than a pistol shot. And I disarm you.

TOMMY. I made the lady's acquaintance two years ago when I came to Geneva for the tennis tournament — a very exclusive affair; nobody admitted except by invitation. She was among the best people, surrounded by the flower of their gilded youth.

MASSIMO. Not the best people of the real Geneva society. The cosmopolitan mob.

TOMMY. I saw her again three months ago. Her manners were those of a *grande dame*. Her name stands at the top of all charitable undertakings. Her house is a model of correctness and elegance. People play cards there because cards, among men worth while, express that disregard of money which is the hall-mark of superior people. *You* could not possibly understand these things. She herself never plays. She permits it out of her kindness and because she likes to have people in the house. And I can tell you that I have met people there to whom you would be glad to make your best bow.

MASSIMO. No, no, no! I bow to nobody. People whose bow I might return perhaps — and rich people, mind you. For the rich people who go

there are only harmless fools. But a poor man who frequents such a place must be a scoundrel.

TOMMY. You are hard on the poor.

MASSIMO. Because I respect them. Do you think that I should care to know you if you were still a millionaire? Did I ever look you up in the old days, you and yours? What does relationship matter to me? I do not hear any voice of the blood. Or I hear it only when it speaks of common struggles, sufferings and victories. Three months ago, when I saw you, young, intelligent and reduced to the common level of need, what hopes didn't I have for you! If you had been born poor, what a fine fellow you would have become! If you only knew what you are throwing away! Let me help you. Let us stop using harsh words. I am not speaking to you of duty, but of happiness. Do you think that there is any comparison between the satisfaction I have got out of life and what you have got? Why, think of the mere joy of willing and of winning — something more than a game of tennis! Your world is an empty nutshell. Your gayety comes out of a bottle of champagne. Do you think that you have ever laughed? I mean the kind of laugh that reddens your blood and clears your head like a good sneeze. You smile and sneer, and that is all. Your mirth comes from a very narrow vein. Prosperity doesn't make you happy and adversity stuns you. You do not smile except at people like yourself. You do not smile at people different from yourself because you are afraid of them. We laugh at ourselves, at you, at good and bad turns of fortune. You skim the pot; the good soup stays at the bottom. A travelling tinker on his rounds through his territory sees more than you do in your wanderings over the face of the earth. You complain because all countries are alike and you never notice that every man is different from all the rest.

TOMMY. Oh yes, the old tune about the evils of riches.

MASSIMO. Look out of the window and you will see riches. Those meadows, those groves, that lake and those vineyards — they are riches. Things are riches.

TOMMY. But you keep on wearing yourself out to get riches.

MASSIMO. I try to be sufficient unto myself. The law of life is not to live at the expense of others, be they living or dead. [*Pause*] Why do you go to that house? Answer in the same good faith in which I ask. I won't try to keep you here by force. I leave you free as air. Why do you go? Are you in love with the lady?

TOMMY. Who knows?

MASSIMO. Look me in the face and tell me squarely, without any of your joking.

TOMMY. I'm after money. That's the whole story.

MASSIMO. Which you get by gambling — by gambling, which expresses that disregard for money of which you spoke a moment ago? Exactly. Which is the hall-mark of superior people!

TOMMY. I was not speaking of myself.

MASSIMO. That goes without saying.

TOMMY. You needn't think that I don't despise myself.

MASSIMO. And what sort of opinion do you think I can have of you?

TOMMY. But I didn't make myself what I am.

MASSIMO. You might make yourself over.

TOMMY. I haven't the will power.

MASSIMO. Rely on someone who has.

TOMMY. On you, for example?

MASSIMO. Why not?

TOMMY. We don't understand each other.

MASSIMO. Then on your sister.

TOMMY. On Nennele. You have that much respect for Nennele?

MASSIMO. I think I have.

TOMMY. That's interesting.

MASSIMO. I have much respect and much pity.

TOMMY. Why pity?

MASSIMO. Because your social connections are certainly not a source of joy to her. — And they might hinder her from making a good marriage.

TOMMY. Ah, there's the motive! I might have known that there was something back of all that zeal for my moral salvation.

MASSIMO. If I wished to marry your sister, and you were branded and sealed for the dirtiest scoundrel on earth, I should marry her just the same.

TOMMY. Provided she would have you.

MASSIMO. Of course.

TOMMY. And if she wouldn't have you? Eh? If she wouldn't have you? What sort of figure would your boasted

will cut then? Eh? If she wouldn't have you? And what's more, she won't have you! We are not of the same breed. Good-bye!

MASSIMO [*putting his arm through* TOMMY'S, *ironically*]. They say that Mme. Orloff is looking for another husband. You ought to push your claim there.

TOMMY. That's an idea. Thanks for the suggestion. [*Seeing* NENNELE *through the doorway*] Nennele.

[NENNELE *enters from her room*]

MASSIMO. Try to hold back your brother. He seems bound to ruin himself. I have done all I could.

NENNELE. So have I.

TOMMY. You?

NENNELE. I know where you are going. It isn't hard to guess. She passes by here every morning with her groom. I don't know who she is. But she can't be of much account if you don't care to tell me that the invitation was from her. You considered it necessary to lie in order to deceive me.

[*Enter* GIULIA *and* GIOVANNI]

GIULIA [*entering from the rear*]. Nennele, get ready your prettiest dress. This evening I'm going to take you to the concert at the Club.

NENNELE. Me!

TOMMY. Why?

GIULIA. It hadn't occurred to me before. Your father just thought of it. It didn't seem the correct thing to go alone. Tommy wouldn't do. But under the protection of a young lady — He's quite right.

TOMMY. Nennele shan't go to that place.

GIOVANNI. What did you say?

TOMMY. I beg your pardon, but you don't understand —

GIOVANNI. I don't understand what? Explain yourself.

TOMMY. That place is not a —

GIULIA. Not a respectable Club? [*To* GIOVANNI] Ask Max who has known Geneva for years.

TOMMY. I didn't say —

GIULIA. Ask Max, ask Max. [*To* MASSIMO] Why don't you speak up?

MASSIMO. Oh, am I Max? I didn't remember your having used that version of my name before. — The Club is lively, but highly respectable.

GIULIA [*to* GIOVANNI]. Now, you see. [*To* TOMMY] So now —

TOMMY. I'm speaking of Nennele.

NENNELE. Of me only?

TOMMY. And it's not a question of the Club. [*To* GIOVANNI] If you have allowed mamma to join, it is a sign —

GIOVANNI. I had nothing to do with it. She mentioned it to me after she had joined. She told me that it did not cost a penny and that she had to do it in order to sell her pictures.

TOMMY. Oh, of course, mamma is an artist. She has gone into it with true artistic ardor — she produces —

NENNELE. Is it for *you* to talk in that way?

TOMMY. And an acquaintance with other artists may help her along. But Nennele!

NENNELE. If it is all right for mamma to go, it is all right for me, too. I can't see that there is any difference. Either it is not a proper place, and [*to* TOMMY] you are opposed to it on her account; or it *is* a proper place, and then I'll go with her.

MASSIMO. You're right, you're right.

TOMMY [*to* NENNELE]. You know perfectly well —

GIOVANNI. What does Nennele know? It is my business to know it, too. I will not permit any holding back. Out with it.

TOMMY. I meant to say that our position —

GIULIA. Your position is the same as ours, and you frequent fashionable society. And such society!

GIOVANNI [*dazed*]. Tommy!

GIULIA. Aren't you going to lunch with Mme. Orloff?

GIOVANNI. Who is she?

GIULIA. She is a beautiful —

GIOVANNI. I didn't ask you. [*To* MASSIMO *and* TOMMY] Who is this Mme. Orloff? [*Silence*] You don't answer — neither of you? Am I to be the only one left in ignorance in my own house?

NENNELE [*with much emotion*]. Oh, father, you ought to see — you ought to notice things.

GIULIA. Speak with respect to your father.

GIOVANNI. What can I see from my office! I am shut up there from morning till night. And besides —

NENNELE. You ought to come out. You ought to oversee things. Don't you understand? Everything is going to pieces in this house.

GIULIA. What is? What is going to pieces? Why, the idea!

GIOVANNI. Be quiet.

GIULIA. We are living peacefully — I am working. Going to pieces!

GIOVANNI. Hold your tongue!

TOMMY [*to* MASSIMO]. Are you satisfied now, eh?

MASSIMO. Yes, pretty well satisfied.

NENNELE. Take charge of things. Take charge of things. What does money matter? I will do the servant's work, if it comes to that. But you — your hand ought to be felt here. It ought to have been felt in Milan.

TOMMY. Nennele!

GIOVANNI. Don't interrupt her. She's right. Do you remember, Massimo, what I said to you at Milan. I'm a draught horse to do the work and nothing more. I ruined them — and I wasn't able to arm them against the ruin.

GIULIA [*to* TOMMY]. There you are. See what you got by meddling.

GIOVANNI. I told you so, Massimo. I'm a bad father.

NENNELE. No, no, no!

GIOVANNI. And it was only right that you should be the one to reproach me for it.

NENNELE [*embracing him*]. No, no — forgive me. No, forgive me —

TOMMY [*to* MASSIMO]. You may take me to see your friend to-day. I'll accept the position.

GIULIA [*to* TOMMY *and* MASSIMO]. Trust her to do things on a large scale.

GIOVANNI [*caressingly to* NENNELE]. Yes, dear, yes, dear. You love me, I know. I will do what I can — you'll see. But leave me now — leave me. There are other things to be done. I want to know everything — Tommy will have to —

MASSIMO. Tommaso has renounced fashionable society, as your wife calls it. I will explain to you later. As for the Club —

GIULIA. As if anybody were giving a thought to the Club! Or as if I went for my own pleasure!

GIOVANNI. Why did Tommy not want Nennele —?

MASSIMO. He was right — when he spoke of your position. Nennele is trying to get teaching to do. And if it became known that she was going about among society people — it would make it still harder for her.

[MARTA *appears from the rear*]

NENNELE [*quickly, to* MARTA]. Did you come to set the table? I'll do it. You needn't wait.

[*She fetches the cloth from the sideboard*]

GIOVANNI [*to* MASSIMO]. I'd like to have a long talk with you to-day.

MASSIMO. As long as you like.

[GIOVANNI *goes and sits down thoughtfully near the window*]

MASSIMO [to NENNELE]. Can I help you?

NENNELE. If you like.

[*They set the table together*]

GIULIA [*to* TOMMY]. I'll have to write a note now.

TOMMY. So will I. But who'll deliver it? It must go at once.

GIULIA. I'll see to it.

[*She goes to her room*]

[TOMMY *sits down at the little table to write*]

NENNELE [*to* MASSIMO] To-morrow I'm going to begin the lessons again.

MASSIMO. I have faith in you.

NENNELE. And how about the others?

MASSIMO. It's too good to last — when the sky clears all at once.

ACT III

The same room as in Act II.

GIULIA [*on the threshold of* NENNELE'S *room*]. Nennele.

NENNELE [*heard from her room*]. Yes, mamma.

GIULIA. Give me the key to the little table.

NENNELE [*entering*]. What little table?

GIULIA [*pointing to the one which stands against the wall*]. That one.

NENNELE. What for?

GIULIA. Give it to me.

NENNELE. Excuse me. What for?

GIULIA. To get some money.

NENNELE. Is there some bill to pay? I'll see to it.

GIULIA. There isn't any bill. I want the money for myself. Am I to give you a strict account of all my doings?

NENNELE. Certainly not. You are at liberty to ask father for what you want and I have nothing to do with it. But this money is for the house. It is in my charge and it is my business to see that it is used only for the house.

GIULIA. Are you the mistress here?

NENNELE. No. And for that very reason I cannot give away what does not belong to me.

GIULIA. Just as if Tommy didn't get money from you!

NENNELE. A week ago I offered him some.

GIULIA. Didn't I tell you!

NENNELE. But I wouldn't offer him any now. I have reproached others for being weak. I do not want to be weak myself.

GIULIA. Even Tommy is amused at the airs you give yourself.

NENNELE. I've noticed that you two appear to have some sort of understanding between you. You seem to have become his confidant.

GIULIA. Precious little there is to confide. He's undertaken a disagreeable task and he's devoting himself to it. Do you doubt it?

NENNELE. No. But I don't understand why he avoids me. He seems to be hiding something from me. If he's working, he's doing his duty. I believe that in this house everybody ought to make it his business to attend to the things that concern him.

GIULIA. And it concerns you to be my governess, does it? For the last week I've had you at my heels every minute. Doubtless by order of the master of us all — Mr. Max.

NENNELE. Is that all you have to say to me?

GIULIA. I have to say this: that if you think Max a pattern of all the virtues, you ought to marry him and put an end to a rather ambiguous state of affairs.

NENNELE. Are you sure you have nothing more to say? Father is just coming up. You might discuss it with him.

[*Returns to her room*]

GIULIA. Miss Impertinence.

GIOVANNI [*entering with a package in his hand*]. Somebody brought this for you.

GIULIA. What is it?

GIOVANNI. I don't know.

GIULIA. Oh, it's probably what's left of my pictures — the ones that have not been sold.

GIOVANNI. Did you sell some?

[*Goes to break the string*]

GIULIA [*smiling disdainfully*]. What a question! I was on the list of Club members who had sold pictures. Don't pull so hard; you might spoil them.

GIOVANNI. Then give me the scissors.

GIULIA. Untie the knot. The string will do for another time.

GIOVANNI. What an economical manager!

[*Tries to untie the string*]

GIULIA. I suppose you think that Nennele is the only person who can keep accounts.

GIOVANNI. Oh, pshaw, it doesn't pay to be miserly. [*Takes the scissors from the table and cuts the string*] How many were there?

GIULIA. Twelve.

GIOVANNI [*counting them*]. Three, six, nine — they're all here.

GIULIA. Impossible!

GIOVANNI. Count them yourself.

GIULIA. There must have been some mistake. I was on the list. Helmer told me so. They'll send and get them back. You'll see.

[*She places the pictures on the sideboard*]

GIOVANNI. Don't think that I'm disappointed.

GIULIA. There you are! At the first touch of failure you have no more faith in me.

GIOVANNI. But I never had any. And I thank the Lord that you're no artist.

GIULIA. Oh, is that how things stand? Then you'll agree with me that I ought to resume my domestic duties. I am your wife. The management of this household is my business.

GIOVANNI. Resume! At Milan the butler looked after the large accounts under my direction. And for the small ones there was Lucia, who took her orders from Nennele.

GIULIA. Because a young girl has to learn —

GIOVANNI. Exactly. And she has learned.

GIULIA. So I am to be under the control of Nennele?

GIOVANNI. You are under the control of no one. Am I under control?

GIULIA. If I want a cup of coffee, am I to go and ask Nennele's permission?

GIOVANNI. Tell Marta. Have you asked anybody's permission up to the present time?

GIULIA. While I believed myself useful along other lines and had a reason for it, then it was all right. I was making my contribution to the household, was I not?

GIOVANNI. To be sure you were.

GIULIA. But if I can't be useful in any other way, I'll be an economical manager, as you called me.

GIOVANNI. What is there to keep you from painting?

GIULIA. Nobody has any faith in me. You're glad when I don't sell my pictures. Very well, then. Bring along the cash-box and the account-book and the blue kitchen apron and I'm ready for business.

GIOVANNI. Oh, have some little mercy on me. Don't give me any more worries.

GIULIA. Am I your wife? Am I mistress here?

GIOVANNI. And I — what am I?

GIULIA. That's no reason for upsetting the order of nature. I'll settle the matter with Nennele.

GIOVANNI. Leave Nennele out of the the question, if you please. Don't drag in Nennele.

GIULIA. You're afraid of her because she answers you back, because she talks a lot. But I have got a voice, too.

GIOVANNI. I am quite aware that you have.

GIULIA. And our young lady shall hear it.

GIOVANNI. Be careful. My head feels as if it were going to burst. I'm tired, tired, tired. If you cause me any more worries, you'll have me sick on your hands. You don't know, nobody knows, what a life I've been leading for the past three months. Nobody knows. Take over the management, the accounts, the money, but don't let there be quarrelling in the house, for pity's sake.

GIULIA. Very well, on that condition. You'll tell Nennele?

GIOVANNI. Yes, I'll tell her.

GIULIA. Tell her at once.

GIOVANNI. If only the Lord in His mercy would send someone an inspiration to buy some of those —

GIULIA [*calling*]. Nennele.

GIOVANNI. Now?

GIULIA. It's best to strike the iron while it's hot. You'll see in what good order I'll put everything — and without being niggardly either.

NENNELE [*enters*]. Did you call? Has Massimo come?

GIOVANNI. Not yet.

NENNELE. The train gets in at nine. It's eleven now.

GIOVANNI. Yesterday's storm must have caused it. It probably snowed in the mountains and he missed the train.

NENNELE. He would have telegraphed.

GIOVANNI. Or business has kept him in the city.

NENNELE. No, he always comes here first.

GIULIA. Your father wanted to tell you —

GIOVANNI. Leave it to me. [*Taking* NENNELE *aside*] Nennele, mamma wishes to take over the management of the house from now on.

NENNELE. And you are going to let her have it?

GIOVANNI. She has a right to it, you know.

NENNELE. Of course she has. And it's soon done. Here are the things.

[*She goes to the little table to open the drawer*]

GIOVANNI [*going up close to her, softly*]. Are you angry about it?

NENNELE. No.

GIOVANNI [*in a whisper*]. For the sake of peace in the house.

NENNELE. Yes.

GIOVANNI. Smile at me, little girl, smile.

NENNELE. How good you are!

GIOVANNI [*in a whisper*]. And — keep on looking after things a little.

NENNELE [*in a whisper*]. Don't be afraid. [*To* GIULIA] Here are sixty-three *lire* and thirty centesimi. This is the account-book and these are the dealers' bills.

GIOVANNI. By the way, on Sunday I'm going to take you both to Chamonix.

GIULIA. It was about time.

NENNELE. Why?

GIOVANNI. I've arranged it with Massimo. He's going to open his first section of railroad on Sunday. I'm tired. A couple of days in the open air will do me good. I need a change.

NENNELE. Of course you do. But we don't.

GIULIA. Don't the ganders lead the geese to water?

GIOVANNI. I wouldn't get any pleasure out of it by myself. [*To* NENNELE] Don't worry about the expense. That's provided for.

NENNELE. But there are so many of us going.

GIOVANNI. Little miser! Put some trust in your old spendthrift father. I know what I'm about. When Massimo comes, send him down to the office.

NENNELE. All right.

[GIOVANNI *goes out*]

NENNELE. I forgot. This is the key to the drawer. You will do well to keep it locked.

GIULIA. What do you mean?

NENNELE. A week or so ago I missed thirty *lire*. Three days ago I noticed that the gold chain Aunt Irene gave me was missing. I'm certain that I brought it from Milan. But since we came here I haven't had any occasion to wear it. It's impossible to tell how long ago it disappeared. The day before yesterday I put my bureau drawers in order and took particular note of the position of everything so that I should know if anything else was touched. And yesterday I missed that silver photograph frame. Do you remember it?

GIULIA. I think I do. A frightful thing. I hated it.

NENNELE. In any case —

GIULIA. That's what comes of having cheap servants.

NENNELE. Marta is absolutely honest.

GIULIA. And then lots of things cannot be found when you look for them and turn up later.

NENNELE. I put it in its place only the day before yesterday. [*Somewhat ironically*] You have never missed anything, I suppose?

GIULIA. What are you smiling for?

NENNELE. I merely asked you if you'd ever missed —

GIULIA. Oh, who knows how many things. But I trust everybody. A child could get the better of me.

NENNELE. Indeed!

GIOVANNI [*enters*]. Giulia, there's a gentleman here to see you.

GIULIA [*nervously*]. Helmer.

HELMER [*entering*]. Pray excuse me for the unseemly hour. [*To* GIULIA, *bowing toward* GIOVANNI] Won't you do me the honor?

GIULIA. What? You two have never met? Oh, Giovanni, this is Helmer Strile, a great master.

HELMER. I am honored.

GIOVANNI. I thank you.

GIULIA [*to* NENNELE]. Helmer Strile. [*To* HELMER] My husband's daughter. — Did you know that they had sent me back all my pictures?

HELMER. I've come to see you about that very thing. Where are they?

GIULIA. Here they are.

[*Leads* HELMER *toward the sideboard*]

GIOVANNI [*softly, to* NENNELE]. What's he a master of?

NENNELE [*softly*]. He's an artist. They call each other masters among themselves.

GIOVANNI. Has he been here before?

NENNELE. Never inside the house.

GIOVANNI. Do you like him?

NENNELE. No.

GIOVANNI. Neither do I. [*To* HELMER] Will you excuse me? I have to go to my office.

HELMER. Certainly, certainly.

[GIOVANNI *goes out.* NENNELE *takes a book from the little table and goes to sit down by the window*]

HELMER. You should have been included in the Club's list. But the Geneva clique wouldn't hear of it. They praise you, but they say that you have been here only three months and can wait.

GIULIA. Wait! I'll give up art.

HELMER. Don't say sacrilegious things. Art can't be given up. It's in the blood. By a lucky chance a friend of mine saw your pictures. He fell in love with them and has authorized me to buy them.

GIULIA. All of them?

HELMER. For the present, one — or two. Two, two. I'll have to arrange about the price with the secretary of the Club. Such things can't be discussed between you and me.

GIULIA. Did you hear, Nennele?

NENNELE. I think so. Yes.

GIULIA. I've sold two pictures. I'm particularly pleased to have you know.

NENNELE. Who bought them?

HELMER [*with slight embarrassment*]. A fellow countryman of mine, a great lover of art.

NENNELE. Oh!

HELMER [*in a whisper, to* GIULIA]. We never see each other any more. I came here two mornings.

GIULIA [*in a whisper*]. *She* was here. [*To* NENNELE] Nennele, will you be kind enough to go down-stairs to where I keep my paint things and get from the big drawer that panel — the one that is barely sketched. See that you don't smudge it. It's still wet.

HELMER. Couldn't I —?

[NENNELE *goes out without a word*]

GIULIA. I have a little keepsake for you. Wait.

[*Runs into her room*]

HELMER [*looking at the pictures*].

What couldn't I have bought with a hundred *lire*?

[GIULIA *returns with a cabinet photograph in a silver frame wrapped up in tissue-paper and gives it to* HELMER]

GIULIA. To my master and friend.

HELMER. Your portrait! How beautiful it is! How beautiful you are! And what an exquisite frame! How well the cold purity of the silver frames your face! A lovely thing! I thank you.

[*He kisses her hands*]

GIULIA. Wrap it up quickly and put it away — hurry up so that she won't see it. [*She wraps up the frame in the tissue-paper.* HELMER *puts it in his pocket*] For the past week she has gone out every time I went. She follows me everywhere. I saw you the other morning and was going to meet you, but — I knew that she would come along too. What a life!

HELMER. I've come to depend upon you in my work. If you are not with me, the universe vanishes, things have neither voice nor color and confide none of their secret meanings.

GIULIA. What shall we do?

HELMER. I've found such a beautiful place — on the other side of the lake. A pensive and solemn retreat.

GIULIA. Don't speak of it.

HELMER. Is it possible that you cannot succeed in getting free for a single moment? I long to have you see it.

GIULIA. Where is it?

HELMER. Oh no. I want to take you there myself.

GIULIA. It's impossible — with you.

HELMER. You have robbed me of all my peace of mind.

GIULIA. I dare not listen when you talk like that. Is it far away?

HELMER. No. My old friend will go with us. Permit me to hope.

GIULIA. I should like to. Don't ask more. I'm not free.

HELMER. But does the young lady never go out by herself?

GIULIA. Twice a week she has a lesson in the city.

HELMER. When? To-morrow?

GIULIA. Yes, to-morrow she has one.

HELMER. Shall I look for you at the Club? At what time?

GIULIA. No, no, I don't want to go to-morrow.

HELMER. Why?

GIULIA. On Friday? Never.

HELMER. On Saturday, then.

GIULIA. She has no lesson that day.

HELMER. Sunday?

GIULIA. Sunday. Sunday, perhaps, I might be able. — Here she comes. Be talking.

HELMER. The realists refuse to understand that symbols —

[NENNELE *enters without speaking and resumes her previous seat*]

GIULIA. Well?

NENNELE. There was no panel in the drawer — neither sketched nor ready to sketch.

GIULIA. You didn't find it? In the little drawer.

NENNELE. You told me it was in the big one, but I looked in the little one too.

GIULIA. That's strange — because —

NENNELE. Oh, mamma!

HELMER. May I take these pictures away with me now?

GIULIA. Just as you please. I'll wrap them up. [*She takes up two pictures*] These two?

HELMER. They're all beautiful. Suppose you make the choice.

MASSIMO [*enters*]. I've been dreadfully delayed.

GIULIA. Oh, it's you, Max.

MASSIMO. Good morning, aunt. [*To* NENNELE] How are you?

NENNELE. I've been looking for you.

MASSIMO. One delay after another. [*Noticing* GIULIA *with the two pictures in her hand*] Are those your pictures?

GIULIA. You wouldn't like them.

MASSIMO. Let me see. I do like them.

GIULIA. Do you really mean it?

MASSIMO. I like them very much. But I don't know whether you should take that as praise.

HELMER. Art is a matter of emotion, not of reason.

MASSIMO. Excuse me, sir, I reason about it. I like a picture that I don't understand, and I like it for the very reason that I don't understand it.

HELMER. The penetration into the occult.

MASSIMO. What's that?

HELMER. I say, the penetration into the occult.

MASSIMO. If that remark of yours were put on canvas I should like it. The pictures that I can understand dictate to me. It's a wood, it's a meadow. And I'm not always disposed

to be satisfied with a wood or a meadow. But in those that I don't understand I see what I want to see according to the humor of the moment. I do the dictating.

NENNELE. Fine, Massimo! The best pictures are the spots on the wall.

HELMER. Oh!

MASSIMO. Of course they are. In the morning when I wake up, I look at them and see clouds, dromedaries, caves, emperors, pancakes —

GIULIA [*disdainfully*]. How economical!

[*She spreads out a sheet of wrapping-paper on the table*]

HELMER. One moment. [*Taking the portrait from his pocket*] Put this in too —

GIULIA [*in a whisper*]. Be careful with it.

[HELMER *starts to wrap them up*]

MASSIMO [*to* NENNELE]. I thought I would never get here. Have you had villainous weather here, too?

NENNELE. Yes.

GIULIA [*standing in front of the table in order to hide* HELMER]. All day yesterday and all last night.

MASSIMO. Up in the mountains there's been accident after accident. The Arve running over its banks, two bridges swept away, houses ruined, three people carried down with the torrent —

NENNELE. Killed?

MASSIMO. Oh, in half a minute after they fell in! Not even time to drown! Dashed against rocks and stumps —

GIULIA [*to* HELMER, *who has wrapped up the pictures*]. Here, let me tie it.

NENNELE. We'll see the ruins on Sunday when we go up to Chamonix.

MASSIMO. Oh, you're going then?

GIULIA. As far as I'm concerned, I think not.

[*She begins to tie the package which* HELMER *is holding*]

NENNELE. Why, mamma, it was you who were so anxious to go.

GIULIA. I don't like sudden displays of self-denial. I think things over and then act for the best.

NENNELE. Indeed!

[*The portrait slips from the package and falls to the floor*]

MASSIMO [*to* HELMER]. Look out!

[*He picks up the portrait.* GIULIA *snatches it from his hand.* NENNELE *has seen the frame and breaks out into a laugh*]

MASSIMO [*to* NENNELE]. What's the joke?

NENNELE [*smiling*]. Nothing.

GIULIA [*wrapping and tying up the pictures in a rage*]. There, it won't slip out now. [*To* HELMER] Here, take it. I'll go as far as the garden gate with you.

HELMER. Thanks. Good morning, miss; good morning, sir.

[HELMER *and* GIULIA *go out*]

MASSIMO. What was it all about?

NENNELE. I'm disgusted, disgusted, disgusted. She has forced that sentimental young booby who is dawdling around her all the time to buy two of her pictures. She understood perfectly that he was buying them. He himself was dying to make her understand it. They sent me away on a pretext so that they could consult together. What understanding they came to, I don't know. But she, who had been crazy to go to Chamonix next Sunday and snapped at me for making objections, she was now — did you hear it? — she was talking about prudence! Oh, what a despicable creature! And I've put in a week at the stupid and odious task of being watch-dog. I've been doing that most ridiculous thing! Can you imagine it? A girl of my age taking charge of her step-mother's morals! You are surprised at my talking like this. I ought not to know? I ought not to see? Everybody knows and everybody sees. The plays that are prohibited on the stage are to be seen here — in this house. The only surprising thing is that they can still offend me. Tell the truth and say that you think me ridiculous — vile. Oh, the pity and the horror of it! What do you think of me, Massimo — what do you think of me?

MASSIMO. I'm learning. I'm coming to know that my way of living has left me ignorant of a great many things. But you needn't worry about what I think of you. Your revolt seems to me a mighty wholesome thing.

NENNELE. I'm at the end of my tether. If you only knew the ideas that come into my head sometimes! And I've even turned Tommy against me. Tommy, with his exquisite taste and his sensitiveness, must have found my pretences and my whole conduct silly and despicable. And he has gone over to mamma's side. They have some kind of understanding between them. They smile at each other and talk together, and when I come near, they stop.

MASSIMO. Are you jealous?

NENNELE. Not as much as I should have thought.

MASSIMO. That's pride speaking!

NENNELE. I can't understand it, and it worries me terribly. You don't know anything about Tommy?

MASSIMO. No. Any new developments?

NENNELE. I don't know.

MASSIMO. Is he attending to his work?

NENNELE. I think so. He goes away every morning, comes back for lunch, and stays out again until dinner time. But he seems unhappy. I've tried so hard to put some courage and cheerfulness into him. I tried to will it for him. You once told me that the will could accomplish anything.

MASSIMO. When it is properly directed.

NENNELE. Do you think that you can always bring about whatever you wish for?

MASSIMO. Almost always. With time and silence.

NENNELE. Do you think that I could, too?

MASSIMO. I think so — within the limits of the reasonable. It's true that if you tried to make a strong man out of Tommy — who has such exquisite taste and sensitiveness. — And besides, you're still hampered by a lot of warring instincts — or rather, your habits and your reason are at war.

NENNELE. I don't understand.

MASSIMO. At any rate, don't wear out your will by putting it to work at hopeless tasks. Those who are determined to go to ruin must go. What could you do with your step-mother, for example? I think that your father has weighed and judged her, and that he asks for only one thing — to be left to do his work in peace.

NENNELE. But don't you feel any rebellion?

MASSIMO. Do you rebel against the leaves that are scattered by the wind? Keep them on the tree if you can. They have such exquisite grace and elegance. But nobody knows what their end will be. Indeed, there is no end for people of that kind. They never settle things once for all, by a definite, final move. They flutter about from one dirt heap to another, and at last they disappear in the universal filth. Some fine day you turn around and they're not there.

NENNELE. Do you think that's true about Tommy, too?

MASSIMO. I don't know yet. I intended to see my friend this morning in order to find out about Tommy. But this delay has upset all my plans. I telegraphed him from the last station to send word to me here. We'll soon know.

[GIULIA *enters from the rear*]

NENNELE [*as soon as she sees* GIULIA, *to* MASSIMO]. Go and see if father is waiting for you in the office. As soon as you know anything, come and tell me, will you?

[MASSIMO *goes out*]

GIULIA. Did you send him away so that you could be alone with me?

NENNELE. No. Father told me to send him to the office.

GIULIA. Might I inquire the reason for that unseemly burst of laughter?

[NENNELE *starts to leave the room*]

GIULIA. Come here.

NENNELE. Mamma, it's much better for you to let me go.

GIULIA. I know what you think. I suppose there is only one silver frame in the whole world.

NENNELE. Let us not discuss it. It's such a vulgar thing! I say nothing about it and I don't want to know anything.

GIULIA. You thought the frame was yours, did you?

NENNELE. Please let me go. Let us not discuss it. It disgusts me.

GIULIA. You suspected it. You subjected me to a nice cross-examination.

NENNELE. The frame was mine. I recognized it. I suspected as much before I spoke to you about it. After I spoke to you I was certain. Yesterday, in passing, I saw you go into my room. I went down into the garden and began to sing so that you wouldn't suspect. I saw you peer out through the curtains. I came up again in a few minutes and saw my bureau drawer open and then I understood everything. I spoke to you about it to show you that I was on my guard. I should never have referred to the subject again.

GIULIA. You're inventing the whole thing. It's not true that I went into your room.

NENNELE. Tommy saw you coming out.

GIULIA. I may have opened the door to look for you.

NENNELE. If you liked the frame you might have asked me for it.

GIULIA. But I didn't like it.

NENNELE. Indeed! For the purpose for which you wanted it —

GIULIA. What purpose? That brings up another question. What purpose? To show my gratitude to a man who has given himself the trouble to teach me art, I put a portrait of myself into a frame of my own. You see, I tell you the whole thing, it is so innocent. It was a portrait of myself. You did not even know that much.

NENNELE. It was to be inferred.

GIULIA. You've taken to inferring things?

NENNELE. Much more than you think.

GIULIA. Of course. You've been spying on me for some time. It's a nice sort of respect you show me! I have pretended not to notice it out of consideration for your poor father.

NENNELE [*smiling bitterly*]. Yes?

GIULIA. But now when you've dared to cast suspicion on me, I want to go to the root of the thing. I want it cleared up.

NENNELE. No, mamma, no. Don't let us make a fuss.

GIULIA. We must have light on this whole affair. We must have evidence. You accuse me? Prove your accusation. Your father shall be the judge.

NENNELE. Oh, please don't.

GIULIA. You're afraid, are you?

NENNELE. Afraid!

[TOMMY *enters*]

NENNELE. Oh, Tommy, come here. You couldn't have appeared more conveniently. [*To* GIULIA] Are you willing to submit it to Tommy?

GIULIA. Of course I am.

TOMMY. What's the matter?

GIULIA. Your sister accuses me of going through her bureau drawers. She says that yesterday you saw me take —

NENNELE. I didn't say he saw you take anything. You denied having been in my room. I said that Tommy saw you coming out.

TOMMY. Why, what sort of talk is this? I don't know anything about it.

NENNELE. Oh, Tommy, don't try to get out of answering. Can't you see? Do you want her to be able to say that I told a lie? Yesterday I met you here when I came up from the garden. I asked you — I remember I did it in a very offhand way because I didn't want you to suspect — I asked you if you had seen mamma. I didn't want to run the risk of going into the room and finding her still there. It would have been so embarrassing! And you answered —

[TOMMY *still stands impassive, looking at nothing*]

NENNELE [*looking him straight in the face*]. Is it not so?

TOMMY. I don't remember.

GIULIA [*triumphantly*]. Ah ha!

TOMMY [*in a whisper, to* GIULIA]. Keep still.

NENNELE. I suppose you have also forgotten that it was from you the first suspicions came —

TOMMY. What suspicions?

NENNELE. Oh, of course, it has gone out of your head, Tommy. You have such a poor memory!

TOMMY. Can't we drop it?

NENNELE. No, no. This too must be said to show how far my inventions go. Just a week ago — last Tuesday — I spoke to you about thirty *lire* —

TOMMY. You're dreaming.

NENNELE. Mamma, I ask your pardon. I am a liar.

GIULIA. Now you see!

TOMMY [*in a whisper, to* GIULIA]. Please —

GIULIA. I'm satisfied, I'm satisfied. — You'll find out in time. — I'm satisfied.

[*She goes into her room*]

NENNELE [*after a silence*]. Poor Tommy! How hard it must have been for you!

TOMMY [*with great bitterness, suppressing his tears by an effort*]. And you are the person whom I love most in the whole world.

NENNELE. I know.

TOMMY. Don't say anything to me.

[*Goes and sits down at the little table and leans his head on it*]

MASSIMO [*entering from the back with a paper in his hand*]. Nennele.

TOMMY. Oh!

[*Is about to get up and go away*]

NENNELE [*to* TOMMY]. Stay here, stay here. I'll send him away.

[TOMMY *drops his head on the table again*]

NENNELE [*going up to* MASSIMO *and taking him aside*]. Leave us alone here a moment. [*Looking at him*] How pale you are! What has happened?

MASSIMO [*giving her a telegram*]. Read it. It's from that friend to whom I sent your brother.

[NENNELE *reads with increasing dismay and astonishment*]

MASSIMO [*taking back the telegram*]. He stayed just one day.

[*Takes a step toward* TOMMY]

NENNELE. Don't speak to him. Leave it to me. Have you told father?

MASSIMO. I didn't have the courage.

NENNELE. Go out on the lawn. I'll call you later.

MASSIMO. Very well.

[*He goes out*]

NENNELE [*goes up to* TOMMY, *lifts up his head and kisses him*]. What will become of you? What will become of us?

TOMMY. What did Massimo want?

NENNELE. He showed me a telegram from that friend of his. You stayed there just one day.

TOMMY [*getting up and walking away*]. Yes, it's true.

NENNELE. Stay here, stay here by me, and let us talk.

TOMMY. What good will it do?

NENNELE. No good. We'll only suffer a little more. Did mamma know? [TOMMY *nods assent*] She was your confidant?

TOMMY. She guessed.

NENNELE. I didn't. I should never have guessed. Where were you all that time you stayed away from home? Won't you tell me where you were? You can talk to me, you know. I'm the sort of girl who can be told things. Were you at that woman's? Are you in love with her? [TOMMY *shakes his head*] You stayed only one day. Did it bore you? Did you feel humiliated, as I did at my first lesson? Did the whole thing seem wretched and horrible? Or perhaps you knew at the very start that you could never keep it up.

TOMMY. If you only knew how the very sound of your voice hurts me!

NENNELE. I think I know, because it hurts *me* so much. You and I have been together too much. But perhaps it's just as well. If you go to ruin, it's the end for me, too. Do you know, this is the first time that I have failed to guess your thoughts. We used to understand each other so well. You remember when father married again we never said a word — never — neither about him nor her. Only you took me out for a walk every morning. We understood each other so well! You were so good.

TOMMY. It was easy.

NENNELE. You *are* good. [TOMMY *smiles bitterly*] Did you think at the very beginning that you wouldn't keep it up — from the time that you told Massimo you would take the position?

TOMMY. Why do you insist?

NENNELE. I don't know. It seems as if everything hangs on that.

TOMMY. I don't understand.

NENNELE. It seems to me that the whole future depends on that — that it's the most important question I can ask. I can't explain it. It just comes to me that way.

TOMMY. Strange that you ask me the very thing that has been pursuing me all along. You mean, was I able to come to a definite decision for even a moment?

NENNELE. Perhaps. Yes. For even a moment.

TOMMY. It's hard to say. When I accepted, I was persuaded that I wanted to hold out. But — perhaps you noticed — I sat down at once to write a note to the place where I was expected for lunch. And while I was writing I heard an ironical voice within me: "Keep a loophole of escape open." I was astonished that the decision hadn't cost me more of an effort. I kept saying to myself: "When the right moment comes I shall be able to decide." I was counting on things getting a grip on me. I went to the place. The owner showed me all over the works. Wonderful! An immense organism of exquisite delicacy and precision. Then he took me into his office and gave me two or three letters to write. That was all. There was nothing about it that struck me particularly — no exhaustion, no disgust.

NENNELE. No enthusiasm.

TOMMY. And the next day I didn't go back.

NENNELE. Did you put up a fight?

TOMMY. No. I didn't even decide not to go back. I simply didn't go.

NENNELE. Things didn't grip you then?

TOMMY. No.

NENNELE. Well, you have to grip them. — What do you expect to do?

TOMMY. I don't want to think about it.

NENNELE. Can you help thinking about it?

TOMMY. The thought is always in the back of my mind, but I let other thoughts cover it up. I don't dwell on

it. I see myself as in a mirror, as I might be looking at any stranger. I know what will happen. I will do nothing to hasten it or avoid it. I give myself up to the current.

NENNELE [*as if following out a thought of her own*]. To the current of the Arve in flood — which doesn't even give one time to drown — dashed against the rocks and stumps —

TOMMY. What's that?

NENNELE. Oh, nothing. Something Massimo said passed through my mind. You mentioned the current — and — but don't bother about it. It was just a queer fancy.

TOMMY. And father — has he been told?

NENNELE. Not yet.

TOMMY. Is it hard for you to have to live with mamma?

NENNELE. Oh — after all that has happened —

TOMMY. She's an irresponsible. Like me, she'll sink from depth to depth.

NENNELE. You ought not to speak ill of her — now that you have gone over to her side.

TOMMY. Oh, how I despise myself! [NENNELE *does not answer*] And you don't know yet. If you only knew. — I ought to tell you everything. Do you want me to? As I used to do in the old days?

NENNELE. Yes, tell me — tell me everything. It's hard to tell everything. But the harder it is, the more needful it is that you speak. Who knows? Tell me quickly — Tommy.

TOMMY. There's a little aria by Metastasio that keeps coming into my mind: "O voice from my bosom flown."

NENNELE. Oh, misery!

TOMMY [*in a deep, hurried voice*]. I owe money to a woman. Do you understand? A great deal. I didn't ask her for it.

NENNELE. Don't offer excuses.

TOMMY. But it's true. I must tell the whole truth, the bad and the good. She offered it to me — she insisted. I was losing and I wanted to get a new start. I would have given ten years of my life to get it — and I got it that way, easily, easily. Everything in my whole life has been easy — from the very beginning, invariably. Living has been easy, education has been easy, pleasures have been easy. Deference to my betters and kindness to my inferiors have been easy. Religion has been easy, vice has been easy. Only one thing was difficult — to decide. But I didn't have to make any decisions. Up to three months ago my decisions were all made either by habit or caprice. When the day came that I needed to exert my will —

NENNELE. It was rusty.

TOMMY. Oh, worse than rusty. There was no wheel — there was no machinery.

NENNELE. You couldn't even decide for evil.

TOMMY. Oh, evil — that takes care of itself. It is evil that decides for me.

NENNELE. How much do you owe?

TOMMY. What's the use of telling?

NENNELE. Suppose I should write to Aunt Irene who has so much money.

TOMMY. She would send me a scarf-pin.

NENNELE. I could ask Massimo for it.

TOMMY. I've no doubt that he'd give it to you. But after that! It would begin all over again. Better to take the plunge once for all.

NENNELE [*staring at him with wide-open eyes*]. The plunge!

TOMMY [*smiling*]. Not into the water, you know. Did you think I was talking about committing suicide? We don't belong to the class of people who do that sort of thing.

NENNELE. No?

TOMMY. I mean the plunge into millions. I'll pay her back — by marrying her.

NENNELE [*horrified*]. You're going to marry that woman?

TOMMY. I've given my word. Inside of a week.

NENNELE. And I tell you that you won't marry her inside of a week.

TOMMY. What can keep me from it?

NENNELE. You'll find out.

TOMMY. Mind you, if Massimo says a single word to me —

NENNELE. He won't.

TOMMY. And I advise you not to say anything about it to father. It would do no good. There's no sense in worrying him ahead of time. The moment he found it out I should leave the house. I'm of age. When the thing is over — we'll leave Geneva — and he'll know.

NENNELE. Where are you going now?

TOMMY. To her.

NENNELE. Good-bye, Tommy.

TOMMY. You won't ever speak to me again, will you?

NENNELE. I don't know what you're

saying. Good-bye, Tommy. Good-bye, poor Tommy.

[TOMMY *goes out hastily*]

NENNELE [*remains standing rigid and motionless beside the table; with an unconscious movement she beats with her finger on the table, looking straight ahead into space*]. Everything — everything gone! It's all over! [*She repeatedly passes one hand over her head as if stroking her hair*]. To-night.

MASSIMO [*entering*]. I saw him go out. You didn't call me.

NENNELE. That's true. Excuse me. Do you know? He's going to marry that woman.

MASSIMO. Couldn't you make him listen to reason?

NENNELE. I didn't even try. That's the way this house is going to pieces. It's getting ready to fall.

MASSIMO. Your brother isn't the whole house.

NENNELE. The rest are just the same. Mamma is going to ruin by a different way. I've seen such things to-day! A day of revelations!

MASSIMO. But your father?

NENNELE. Yes, he too!

MASSIMO. So upright, so good!

NENNELE. It's true. And I would like to kneel down before him with clasped hands to show him the love I have for him. But there are times when truths reveal themselves naked and inexorable. And one must recognize them. Even he is weak.

MASSIMO. No.

NENNELE. He has none of the energy that overcomes obstacles and dominates people. You are a thousand times stronger than he.

MASSIMO. I don't believe it. I have the energy that undertakes. He has the energy that resists. Which is the most difficult? The one that gives the least satisfaction.

NENNELE. Oh, Massimo, if you only knew how I hate to tell you these things. They are such little things! But you must know, because you are the only one who will be left to him.

MASSIMO. I — the only one?

NENNELE. Listen. This morning he took the management of the house from me and gave it to mamma. It makes me smile to think that I am telling you — I am so far from all that now. He took it from me — and I don't blame him in the least. But right on top of it he came to me and half asked my pardon and whispered to me that I should look after things anyway! Do you see?

MASSIMO. How proud you are!

NENNELE. Oh, no. But I had set him up so high. Every little failing in him hurts me more than the worst faults of the others. I know what he is earning. At the beginning we went along very carefully; but for the last month we have been spending a great deal more — and I told him so — and he laughed about it. I'm a wretch, I know, to think it and say it, but for him the plaster is crumbling, while the bricks are falling for the others. In both cases the house is going to fall.

MASSIMO. Will you marry me, Irene?

NENNELE. I can't accept charity.

MASSIMO. You won't?

NENNELE. No.

MASSIMO. You don't like me?

NENNELE. It isn't that! I don't think you like me — in that way. I don't think that you've ever really understood what sort of person I am.

MASSIMO. I understand — perfectly.

NENNELE. Yes?

MASSIMO. What is it that laughs that way, deep down in your eyes?

NENNELE. You see something that laughs? And yet I thank you for it, Massimo. [*Long pause*] Are you going back this evening to Chamonix?

MASSIMO. I have to. I have work to do. Why do you ask?

NENNELE. Oh, nothing. It's all right. [MASSIMO *goes toward the door*] Are you going?

MASSIMO. Yes, I feel like taking a walk.

NENNELE. Would you like me to go with you?

MASSIMO. No. I want to be alone.

NENNELE. Are you going away angry?

MASSIMO. No. I'm just going to walk up and down outside.

[*He goes out*]

NENNELE [*sadly*]. He didn't understand.

ACT IV

The same scene as in Act III. It is a moonlight night. But the Venetian blinds are closed so that the moonlight cannot enter the room. There is a lamp with a green shade on the table in the middle of the room, where

GIOVANNI *sits writing.* NENNELE *enters cautiously from her own room.*

GIOVANNI. Eh? [*Turns toward* NENNELE'S *door and listens; standing close to the wall,* NENNELE *remains motionless*]. Oh!

[*He shrugs his shoulders and resumes his work*]

[NENNELE, *keeping as far away from her father as possible, moves toward the door. Arrived at the door, she turns and throws a kiss to* GIOVANNI. *She starts to open the door. The latch rattles*]

GIOVANNI [*getting up*]. Who the deuce can it be? Who's there? [*He lifts the shade from the lamp;* NENNELE *has opened the door and slipped out*] Nennele! [*He follows her, overtakes her and brings her back*] What does this mean? What does this mean? Where were you going?

NENNELE [*has a dark shawl over her head and appears much agitated*]. I couldn't sleep. I wanted to get out into the air.

GIOVANNI. Don't you feel well?

NENNELE. Yes, perfectly — but it's so hot. I don't know. I wanted to get out into the air.

GIOVANNI. What's the matter with you? What is it?

NENNELE. I don't know. I had to have air. Let me go.

GIOVANNI. There's plenty of air here. [*He leads her to the large window and opens the Venetian blinds so that the room becomes filled with moonlight*] Sit down here. Here you can get all the air you want — and cool off. Don't you feel chilly?

NENNELE. No.

GIOVANNI. Will you have a little cognac? [*He feels her pulse*] How fast your pulse is! Don't you feel well? Do you want a cup of camomile tea? Shall I call mamma — or Marta?

NENNELE. No, don't call anybody. I don't need anything. I'm all right.

GIOVANNI. You're trembling all over.

NENNELE. I tell you I'm all right. But I was smothering in my room. [*She suddenly bursts into convulsive sobs and throws her arms about his neck*] Oh, father!

GIOVANNI. What is it? What is it? You frighten me — Nennele! Come, Nennele!

NENNELE [*weeping*]. Oh, let me —

GIOVANNI. Cry, cry, yes, cry, my darling. Cry if it will do you any good. You can tell me afterward. [NENNELE *stops crying and looks about as if dazed*] Do you feel a little better? It's nervousness. Stay here and be quiet. Had you already gone to bed?

NENNELE. No. I stood at the window in there a long time.

GIOVANNI. You seemed so happy this evening. At dinner you ate and talked such a lot. When Massimo got up to go, you kept talking about our trip to Chamonix on Sunday. You seemed to be on such good terms with mamma. I was so glad to see that. You felt nothing then?

NENNELE. No.

GIOVANNI. Were you disappointed because Tommy wasn't at dinner? But I'm glad to see him enjoying himself a bit. Do you know who the friends were that had invited him?

NENNELE. No.

GIOVANNI. Some friends from Milan, mamma said.

NENNELE. Probably.

GIOVANNI. Hasn't he come in yet?

NENNELE. No.

GIOVANNI. It's a wonderful night.

NENNELE [*still a little dazed*]. I was standing at the window. I was waiting for him.

GIOVANNI. You were waiting for him? Did you want to speak to him?

NENNELE. No. I was waiting for him to come home — I was afraid I might meet him.

GIOVANNI. Afraid you might meet him?

NENNELE. Um — [*Shakes her head as if she had become aware that she had said something not intended*] That wasn't what I meant to say.

GIOVANNI. Your head is still a little confused.

NENNELE. Perhaps.

GIOVANNI. Do you know what caused this? The storm we had last night. It left a peculiar sultriness that lasted all day. I felt it in my bones.'— Even when you said good-night to me, I thought that your eyes looked strange. They were so brilliant.

NENNELE. I'm all right now. I'll go back to my room.

GIOVANNI. I'll go with you.

NENNELE [*quickly*]. No.

GIOVANNI [*smiling*]. Oh! Do you say "no" like that? And to your

father? Listen to this tone, young lady. No! But I say "yes." Come along.

NENNELE. Let's stay here instead.

GIOVANNI. What is there in your room that I'm not allowed to see? What great mysteries! Nerves are capricious things. Do you want to rest a little? [*He draws up an armchair*] Put your feet here — this way. And keep quiet. You don't want to talk, do you? We'll keep each other company. [*Goes back to the table and begins to write*]

NENNELE [*after a pause*]. What are you doing?

GIOVANNI. I have a piece of work to finish.

NENNELE. To-night?

GIOVANNI. I have to. [*A pause*] Nennele.

NENNELE. Yes, father.

GIOVANNI. When you passed through here just now to go out, and I asked: "Who's there?" why didn't you answer?

NENNELE. I didn't hear you. [*A pause*] You ought not to stay up so late at night. Massimo gives you too much work to do.

GIOVANNI. No, he doesn't.

NENNELE. I'm going to tell him so.

GIOVANNI. I'm not working for Massimo at all.

NENNELE. What?

GIOVANNI. You've caught me in the act, so I may as well confess. It's a little extra work that I've undertaken to do. I saw that my salary was not going to be enough. — I happened upon some good people —

NENNELE. Oh!

GIOVANNI. But — it's a small matter.

NENNELE. How long have you been doing this?

GIOVANNI. A month and a half. Not every night, you know. And now I'm through. This is the last night. I've only to recopy the accounts. I sat down here to do it. The other nights I worked in the office.

[NENNELE *gets up and goes toward her father with her hands clasped*]

GIOVANNI. What's the matter?

NENNELE. Father, I want you to forgive me.

GIOVANNI. For what? For what must I forgive you? [*Smiling*] For this little extra work?

NENNELE. It isn't that. Forgive me.

GIOVANNI. How strangely you look at me! Just as you did when you said good-night. Come here. What is it that I must forgive you for? What have you done to me? Where were you going? Why didn't you answer when I called you? You must have heard me. I called twice. Where were you going? Tell me. You said you were afraid you might meet Tommy. What is it that I'm not allowed to see in your room? Ah! [*Rises*]

NENNELE. No, no!

GIOVANNI. Stay here. And don't move. Do you understand? [*He takes up the lamp, goes and locks the outer door and then hurries into* NENNELE'S *room; she remains motionless near the table;* GIOVANNI *returns with a letter in his hand*] A letter for me? [*Puts down the lamp*]

NENNELE. Don't read it, father.

GIOVANNI. I don't need to. [*He throws the letter on the table*] You're not the rambling sort. You were not running away to see the world. You were running away to — [*A long pause*] You were going to do that! You, Nennele! You were able to conceive such a frightful idea! You were able to carry it out! You crossed this room, you saw me, you would have gone out of this house where I was sitting and you would have — And to-morrow I should have been going about the streets crying like a madman for my daughter. Or this very night they might have brought you here. They would have called me — I would have seen you — there — dead — my Nennele — my Nennele! [*A long pause*] Why? Why? Why? What has happened? I must know. I must know what has happened. To kill yourself — oh! What have I done to you? What have the others done to you? What is this thing in my house that I know nothing about?

NENNELE. I was crazy, I was crazy. Don't ask me — I was crazy.

GIOVANNI. Tell me what it is. Tell me. I command you. Is it Tommy?

NENNELE. Partly. Tommy is ruined. He's going to marry a bad woman. And he has to do it! Massimo will explain. I don't know the details. I just found it out to-day.

GIOVANNI. Where is he?

NENNELE. With her, I think. I don't know, I don't know. I only know that he is past helping. [GIOVANNI *seems stunned*] And I was going

to leave you when you had most need of help and comfort, when you were most alone. And I didn't consider you, and you were considering us all the time and living for us.

GIOVANNI [*pursuing an idea*]. They scatter. They blow away — they blow away!

NENNELE. And I thought unjust things about you and judged you unjustly. Now you must listen to me. I have to confess. I must tell you what I thought of you. The faults of the others seemed gross and horrible. But what I thought of you gnawed at a deeper and more sensitive part of me. I thought that you weren't doing enough for us. Don't you understand? Don't you hear anything of what I'm saying?

GIOVANNI. Yes, dear. I hear. You were right. I haven't done enough for you.

NENNELE. Oh!

GIOVANNI. I don't mean here and now. Here I cannot act differently or do more. I've seen how things were going — oh, how many times! But I couldn't do any more. At Milan, however, when you were children, I could have done more. But then it seemed to me that it was enough to make you rich.

NENNELE. If you only knew how I look up to you! What a sense of peace and security it gives me to feel your watchful protection! Why don't people ever talk about such things? Why don't we ever tell each other everything? Nobody ever tells everything about himself. It does one so much good to speak out one's very soul. No sorrow, no joy will ever be able to make me forget the happiness that I feel at this moment, with you, close to you, understanding and worshipping. Do you forgive me?

GIOVANNI. Dear child, I forgive you and bless you. [*He holds her head in his arms on his breast; then he kisses her brow: then he releases her and walks up and down; finally he goes to the window and looks out*] What a wonderful night! Come here. You're not cold, are you?

NENNELE. No.

GIOVANNI. You said that *no* as you used to say it when you were a little girl — long drawn out, with such a lot of vowels. No-o-o-o-o-o-o. You've not changed much. I can see you again with your little face — [*He interrupts himself to look intently out of the window*] — with your little face as it was then. You've grown thinner. You were such a lovely little girl.

NENNELE. Don't say such things.

GIOVANNI. People on the street would turn to —

[*He looks out again*]

NENNELE. What's the matter? This is the second time that you've interrupted yourself. What do you see out there?

GIOVANNI. I thought I saw a man there under the trees. I must have been mistaken. It was the moonlight casting shadows.

NENNELE. There is — there is someone!

GIOVANNI. Do you see him?

NENNELE. Now he's standing still. He's in the shadow. No. [*She peers out again sadly*] No, no.

GIOVANNI. You say it sadly. Are you disappointed because there's nobody there? Who did you think it was?

NENNELE. Why the idea! Who should it be?

GIOVANNI. Did you think it was Tommy?

NENNELE. No. Nobody.

GIOVANNI. You haven't any more of those bad thoughts?

NENNELE. Oh, no. Never.

GIOVANNI. You'll never think of leaving me again? But I suppose some day you'll have to leave me. I must hope so. Indeed, I had hoped —

NENNELE [*grasping him by the arm*]. It *is* someone! There he is. He has come up in the shade of the hedge — to listen to us. Do you see him?

GIOVANNI. Where?

NENNELE. There, behind that shrub. Look at his shadow there in the moonlight. Do you see? [*With joyous exultation*] He stayed. He was watching. He stayed for me. He understood.

GIOVANNI. What are you saying? Who is it?

NENNELE. Do you want me to call him? Massimo! Won't you come in?

THE END

THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE

(*EL GRAN GALEOTO*)

(*1908*)

By José Echegaray

THE BONDS OF INTEREST

(*1907*)

By Jacinto Benavente

ECHEGARAY AND BENAVENTE: "EL GRAN GALEOTO" AND THE "BONDS OF INTEREST"

In America, we are gradually beginning, through the assiduous labors of a few students, to know something of the content and form of the Spanish drama. As I write, I have by me Barrett H. Clark's "Masterpieces of Modern Spanish Drama" (Stewart and Kidd, 1922); J. D. M. Ford's "Main Currents of Spanish Literature" (Henry Holt and Company, 1919); the plays of Benavente, so conscientiously introduced by John Garrett Underhill; and Mr. Underhill's recently issued edition of "Plays by G. Martinéz Sierra" (E. P. Dutton and Company, 1923), prepared in conjunction with Mr. and Mrs. H. Granville-Barker. In fact, one has, at present, to consult Mr. Underhill on all contemporary Spanish Drama, and if he has not a volume of Quintero translations, it is not for lack of sympathy with the subject.

American audiences have been able to judge, in isolated instances, of the real Spanish flavor, the real Latin temperament, in such plays as "Malvaloca", by the Quintero brothers; "Marta of the Lowlands", by Angel Guimerá, Benavente's "The Bonds of Interest", presented by the Theatre Guild, of New York, and his 'La Malquerida", played by Miss Nance O'Neill under the title of "The Passion Flower." José Echegaray's "El Gran Galeoto" has been variously given, but I have chosen to include in the present collection Charles Frederic Nirdlinger's adaptation of the original, as produced by William Faversham and Julie Opp, not so much because I think it brings out the moral debate of Echegaray's thesis as insistently before the reader as the original, but because it represents what the Continental theatre sometimes has to cope with when it desires to be seen in America. This process is not as flagrant to-day as it was several decades ago. Nevertheless, the Nirdlinger play, as a sheer bit of acting drama, proved effective in its stage presentment, in 1908, and it is equally as effective in the reading. "The Great Galeoto" has been translated by Hannah Lynch, for the *Drama League Series of Plays*, and is easily accessible for comparison with the American adaptation. Herein is a study in stage condition. I have had to include Benavente's "The Bonds of Interest", despite the fact that it is so easily accessible in the Underhill edition, and in Dickinson's second series of "Chief Contemporary Dramatists." It is representative, as "El Gran Galeoto" is representative, of certain phases of the dramatist's temperament and work.

We in America have recently been able to judge of Benavente first-hand, because of his visit to New York in the winter of 1923. To him had just been awarded the Nobel Prize; in 1905, the same honor was bestowed on Echegaray, who had for almost a quarter of a century held the Spanish stage in his hands. It might be said that Echegaray went out with the Ibsen influence, Benavente came in with those newer forces which are working for the newer theatre. But Spain has been slow to be affected by the revolution of ideas in art. We hear much about the Spaniard being untouched by the moral and emotional turbulence which has been

the basis of the modern dramatic movement: his aristocratic social foundation, his codified laws of life, his religious formality served, so the critics claim, to encase the Spaniard, making him impervious to new ideas. Every bit of unprogressiveness on his part was excused because of his peculiarly constituted "Latin mind" and its fixed traditions. Benavente, like Vicente Blasco Ibañez, is a cosmopolitan; this may account for the new spirit which is felt in his drama.

Echegaray's "El Gran Galeoto" has been called the Spanish "School for Scandal." Benavente's "The Bonds of Interest" is a social satire, closely akin to Don Quixote. When it was given by the Theatre Guild, its little ironies were delightfully felt. Echegaray was a professor of mathematics, an engineer, a politician turned dramatist; Benavente came from the circus, a piquant figure entering the theatre thoroughly educated, both in the knowledge of books and the ways of people. Echegaray was born, 1833, in Madrid; Benavente thirty-three years afterwards in the same city. Neither of them had to struggle to make his way.

Echegaray entered the field of drama late in life; his fame, like that of the novelist, De Morgan, came full out of an experience which was not coincident with the unfolding of his art, but was brought to it. He worked out plays, at the first, after having his interest centred on playwriting by the success of his brother, Miguel, much as he would have conceived the technique of a new mathematical problem. Goldberg writes, in his "The Drama of Transition":

"Gloomy as Ibsen himself is Echegaray in his more powerful moments; as insistent as, and less swerving than, Tolstoy in his moral purpose. Unsusceptible to the attacks of critics, he rarely ventured to defend his work except on the basis of morals. His ideal was of the past and of the future. With a vigor that takes him back, on the one hand, to Calderón, he unites a modernity that brings him forward, on the other, to Ibsen and the social philosophers."

Surely one finds him, in "El Gran Galeoto", dealing as insistently with the evil of gossip and its consequences as Henry Becque, in "Les Corbeaux", dealt with the astute fleecing of human beings.

In the preface to Echegaray's "Como Empieza y Como Acaba" (The Beginning and the End) there is to be found his conception of the dramatist's calling. His death, on September 15, 1916, closed a period of the Spanish stage.

Benavente opened another. In some ways, his was the cabaret spirit that marked the Ueberbrettl' phenomenon; in other ways, his was the D'Annunzio nervousness. He is a prolific writer, and, like Sierra, he has translated extensively and well, striking instances of such work being his version of "King Lear" and his rendering of Hazelton and Benrimo's "The Yellow Jacket." Mr. Underhill writes:

"Benavente has . . . tried his hand at almost every *genre*, and he has been successful in them all — peasant drama and the tragedy of blood, so long associated with Spain in the minds of foreigners, satires of provincial and metropolitan society, of the aristocracy, dramas of the middle class, court comedy in the most subtle and refined of forms, in which by birth and breeding the personages are all royal. He has written romantic comedies and dramas, rococo spectacles, imaginative fairy plays of genuine poetic worth. Only the play in verse has remained unattempted. . . ."

Benavente holds strong theories in regard to art. Mr. Underhill gives us a flavor of them in the preface to the second volume of the plays: not the least interesting section deals with the province of the translator who attempts "King Lear", which, with Maeterlinck's comments on the task confronting him as a translator of "Mac-

beth", could form an excellent standard for all translators. There is much of the practical, as a playwright, in Benavente. Coming to the task from the theatre itself, both as an actor and a manager, he speaks with authority. He helped to establish an art theatre; he founded on his own initiative a children's theatre, and wrote for it the delicate "Prince Who Learned Everything Out of Books."

It would seem, from the facts of his artistic life, that Benavente has allied himself with whatever progressive movement marked the theatre of Spain for the past twenty-five years. Which does not mean that he is a theorist, a faddist. For he has the commercial aspect of the playhouse well in view. Here is what he wrote, in his "Table Talk":

"Let us have done with all counterfeits, of which the most common in the theatre are these: the confusion of the vapid with the literary, of the dull with the profound, of the extravagant with the new, the banal with the poetic, the gross with the courageous and bold. All these equivocations invariably end in one other — an empty house, which is explained by saying that the play failed because it was art and the public was unable to appreciate art. But the true art of the theatre is to do good business, and to do good business, you must do good art. . . ."

From Mr. Underhill's volumes I have compiled the following short table of plays by Benavente. They represent a mere handful of his accomplished work, but a long list of Spanish titles conveys little to the English reader. No writer has accomplished greater bulk. Yet bulk seems to be one of the characteristics of many of the Spanish writers, like the Quintero brothers and Sierra.

LIST OF PLAYS TRANSLATED BY MR. UNDERHILL IN THE three-volume edition of plays by JACINTO BENAVENTE (Charles Scribner's Sons)

1. His Widow's Husband. Teatro Príncipe Alfonso, Madrid, October 19, 1908. Staged by the Washington Square Players, of New York.
2. The Bonds of Interest. Teatro Lara, Madrid, December 9, 1907. Staged by the Theatre Guild, New York, April 14, 1919. See *The Drama*, 1915, no. 20, pp. 568–643.
3. The Evil Doers of Good. Teatro Lara, Madrid, December 1, 1905.
4. La Malquerida. Presented by the Compañía Guerrero-Mendoza, Teatro de la Princesa, Madrid, December 12, 1913. Staged by Miss Nance O'Neill as "The Passion Flower." Miss O'Neill has also produced Benavente's "The Field of Ermine."
5. No Smoking (1-a.). Teatro Lara, Madrid, March 3, 1904. See *The Drama*, 1917, no. 25, pp. 78–88.
6. Princess Bebé. Presented by the Compañía Guerrero-Mendoza, Teatro Español, Madrid, March 31, 1909.
7. The Governor's Wife. Teatro de la Comedia, Madrid, October 8, 1901. Staged by the Harvard Dramatic Club. See *Poet Lore*, Jan.-Feb., 1918, vol. 29, pp. 3–72.
8. Autumnal Roses. Presented by the Compañía Guerrero-Mendoza, Teatro Español, Madrid, April 13, 1905.
9. The Prince Who Learned Everything Out of Books. Teatro Príncipo Alfonso, Madrid, December 20, 1909, inaugurating the Children's Theatre. See *Poet Lore*, December, 1918, vol. 29, pp. 505–530.

10. Saturday Night. Presented by the Compañía Guerrero-Mendoza, Teatro Español, Madrid, March 17, 1903. See *Poet Lore*, March-April, 1918, vol. 29, pp. 127–193.
11. In The Clouds. Teatro Lara, Madrid, January 20, 1909.
12. The Truth. 1915.

Bibliographical data relating to Benavente are discussed by Mr. Underhill, in his third volume, p. xviii. For other references to Echegaray and Benavente, consult the individual lists at the end of the present collection.

THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE

(*1908*)

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

By CHARLES FREDERIC NIRDLINGER

AFTER THE VERSE OF JOSÉ ECHEGARAY'S
EL GRAN GALEOTO

THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE

As presented at Daly's Theatre, New York,

November 2, 1908

by Mr. William Faversham and his Company

Cast of Characters

Don Julian	*Mr. H. Cooper Cliffe*
Donna Teodora, *his wife*	*Miss Julie Opp*
Don Severo	*Mr. Charles Harbury*
Donna Mercedes, *his wife*	*Miss Olive Oliver*
Don Pepito, *their son*	*Mr. Harry Redding*
Captain Beaulieu, *of the British Embassy*	*Mr. Morton Selten*
Don Ernesto	*Mr. Faversham*
Genaro, *concierge*	*Mr. Lionel Belmore*

Synopsis of Scenes

Act I. — Drawing-room in Don Julian's home in Madrid. Evening.
Act II. — Two weeks later. Don Ernesto's rooms in the Alvarado Studio.
Act III. — Evening of the same day. Scene same as Act I.
Time — Present.

Copyright, 1908,
By JULIE OPP FAVERSHAM

All rights reserved

Copyright, 1908,
By MITCHELL KENNERLEY

THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE

ACT I

he Scene is the drawing-room in the house of Don Julian: *spacious and sumptuously furnished. The walls are hung with velvet of old-rose; the coverings of chairs and couches are of corresponding tints. The beamed ceiling is of painted cedar. At the back, right, in a large arch, with French windows the full height of the room, opens a wide balcony; at the left, a similar arch leads to a stone hall-way, conducting to* Julian's *apartment. A door at the left of the stage, flanked by tall, many-candled torchères, opens into the entrance hall of the house; a door at the right of the stage leads to the library. Between the arches, at the back, is a grand-piano, and a single torchère of massive design. Below the library door is a mantel of pale-pink marble, with grilled fireplace and brazier of Moorish copper. On the mantel are two antique figures, supporting candelabra.*

Vhen the curtain rises, Teodora *stands at the balcony door; faintly, from the street below, is heard the waltz of the opera "Galeoto," played by the mandolinata.*

Julian [*entering at the door, calling*]. eodora!

[*She does not answer*]

eo!

Teodora [*turns*]. Oh, it's you, dear!

Julian. In the clouds again?

Teodora. There aren't any. The y's as clear as crystal. It's going to e a gorgeous evening.

Julian. I've asked my brother, evero, to dinner — and Mercedes.

Teodora [*with a pout*]. Oh, did you?

Julian. Why, what's the matter?

Teodora. Oh, nothing, nothing at l. Only — I was thinking we'd be l by ourselves this evening — just ou and I — and Ernesto.

Julian. Well, I'll make some excuse — and call it off —

Teodora. No, no, no — it was just a mood — I'm glad they're coming — and we'll dine on the balcony.

[*Rings for* Servant]

Julian. Isn't it too cool?

Teodora. Oh, no — it'll be lovely. [*To* Servant *who enters*]. We'll have dinner on the balcony.

Servant. Yes, Madame — the usual hour, Madame?

Teodora. No, earlier — half an hour — we're going to the opera.

Servant. Yes, Madame.

[*Goes out*]

Teodora. The moon ought to be up, at the latest, with the coffee — and there's sure to be a street-band to play for us. — Julian, there's much we'll miss when we leave Madrid.

Julian. My dear, other countries have a moon and street-bands.

Teodora [*with a regretful toss of the head*]. Not like those of Madrid.

Julian. Well, we may not have to give them up.

Teodora [*surprised*]. Why, you've changed your plans?

Julian. Not so much I, as the Foreign Office.

Teodora. Really? — What's happened?

Julian. For some reason, there's a sudden curious hesitancy over my appointment.

Teodora. Politics, of course?

Julian. To tell the truth, I can't make out what it is. Severo has gone to the Minister, to see if *he* can get at the bottom of the mystery.

Teodora. But it was quite settled, I thought.

Julian. So did I. In fact, I never thought of possible rivalry. It's a very costly Embassy, the one they offered me — urged on me. The war with America left us all so poor — there

aren't many who'd care to take it. — Why, when I lunched at the Palace, a few days ago, the King asked when I'd find it convenient to start. — And the Queen said no end of nice things about you — with your beauty, charm, and tact, the Embassy was sure to succeed — and now *this!* I really don't mind so much about myself, but won't Ernesto be disappointed!

TEODORA. You *asked* he be made First Secretary?

JULIAN. Not only *asked* — stipulated —

TEODORA. And they — agreed —?

JULIAN. Yes! A little dissent at first, — his youth and lack of diplomatic training — but I reminded the Minister the Government owed something to the son of Don Florio, whose devotion to Spain cost him his fortune. . . . Had he made cause with her foes he would not only have saved his vast investments in Cuba, but increased them tenfold. — The least they can do in recompense is to start Ernesto on a diplomatic career.

TEODORA. You think he has the qualities?

JULIAN. Why not? Good-looking?

TEODORA. Rather.

JULIAN. Talks well?

TEODORA. Rather.

JULIAN. And not too much?

TEODORA. Too little, rather.

JULIAN. And dances?

TEODORA. Divinely!

JULIAN. There! Bismarck began with less than that. The one thing Ernesto lacks —

TEODORA. Fortune?

JULIAN. That, thank Heaven, *we* can supply.

TEODORA [*dubiously*]. That's the stumbling-block, I'm afraid.

JULIAN. Why?

TEODORA. Such help — he'll refuse.

JULIAN. Has he said so?

TEODORA. Oh, no — we've never spoken of it — but — you'll find I'm right, Julian.

JULIAN. But I won't hear of such — pride. [*Pushes the bell-button*] Is he in?

TEODORA [*showing the book*]. He — er — sent me this volume of Dante just before you came.

JULIAN [*to* SERVANT *who enters*]. Say to Don Ernesto I wish to see him here. [SERVANT *goes out*] He has no right to deny me the chance to repay, in some small part, what I owe his father. At more than one crisis of my affairs Don Florio helped me to safety. But for him — I should have nothing — least of all you, Teodora. Isn't that enough to make me grateful? — Whatever I might do for the lad, I should never feel free of the debt.

TEODORA. Julian, aren't you a bit fantastic about it? You've been kindness itself to Ernesto. Rushed off to Barcelona the instant you learned he was alone. Brought him here, to be with us until his sorrow had softened. Watched over him, humored his moods, won him gradually — and with such loving care! — from his sombre thoughts. Why — if he were your *brother* —

JULIAN. I've tried to, as if he were my *son*.

TEODORA [*lightly*]. No, no — 'brother' will do — quite well enough. [ERNESTO *appears at the door*] Here he is.

JULIAN. Hello, Ernesto.

ERNESTO [*bowing*]. Julian — and Teodora — you got the book?

TEODORA [*holding it up*]. Thanks.

ERNESTO. Any news, Julian?

JULIAN. Nothing certain. We're waiting for Severo. — If our plans fell through — would you mind very much?

ERNESTO. On *your* account, yes. On my own, not at all.

JULIAN. Why —

ERNESTO. For one thing, I'm too poor for the post.

JULIAN. Legation secretary? Nonsense! Nothing's expected of you. You don't ask people to dinners and dances —

ERNESTO. No, but other people ask me to *theirs* — and gloves and cravats cost something — and cabs don't grow on trees.

JULIAN [*impatiently*]. That phase of the matter I *will* not discuss.

ERNESTO. But I *must*, Julian. It's about that I want to speak with you — [TEODORA *moves as if to go to the door*] And you, too, Donna Teodora. — Now you mustn't think me boorish or ungrateful, but it's high time I cut loose from this secure and comfortable haven and set out to see what I can do for myself.

JULIAN. Nonsense!

ERNESTO [*appealing to* TEODORA]. Am I not right, Teodora?

TEODORA. No! You must come with us! — And we'll marry you to one of those nice, tall American girls —

like we saw at Ostend — who get railroads for dowries, and coal mines for pin-money.

ERNESTO. Alluring — but I've quite decided!

TEODORA [*deprecatingly*]. Of course — if you're unhappy here —

ERNESTO. It's just because I've been so wonderfully happy that I've begun to be — unhappy.

JULIAN. If you'd only look at matters sensibly and realize that whatever I may do for you —

ERNESTO [*interrupting*]. Oh, yes, I know you were loyal friends — but, my dear Julian, I can't accede further to your chivalrous, almost quixotic, memory of a favor long since passed. The companionship of all these months has more than repaid it. Without it I don't know what would have become of me. My father and I were great chums, you know, and I didn't think anything could ever begin to take his place in life, as you have. But now, I beg of you, offer me nothing more that I *must* refuse.

JULIAN [*as if hurt*]. Oh, of course, if my poor services humiliate you — or embarrass you —

ERNESTO. 'Humiliate,' no — 'embarrass,' yes. Of course, you'll say it doesn't amount to anything — that I should take no notice — and at first I didn't. But when people saw me constantly with you — in your box at the opera — using your traps and horses — a wing of the palace set apart for me — your servants at my beck and call — credit at your bankers — why, I can't tell you how often I've been asked: 'You are Donna Teodora's brother?' No. — 'Ah, cousin, then?' No. 'Oh, Don Julian's nephew?' Again, no. 'But, *of course*, a near relation?' No — no relation at all — just a friend, an old friend. 'Ho — ho — well, you're a very lucky young man.' — And up went the eyebrows! [*Laughing*] Now, can't you see that that might become annoying after a while? [*After waiting for some response*] Teo, you must understand?

TEODORA. Why, yes, I —

JULIAN. Well, *I don't* —

TEODORA. But, Julian, you don't have to answer the questions —

JULIAN. Don't I, though! Every day. A little different in form, perhaps. 'That's an attractive young fellow you've stopping with you.' Yes, we like him. 'Going to put him into the bank, I suppose?' No, has no taste for business. 'Politics?' We're trying to induce him. 'And if you can't?' He has some talent for letters. 'Ah, artist? — that's too bad! — Any fortune?' *Yes, just as much as I have.*

ERNESTO [*interrupting*]. But, Julian —

JULIAN. Why not? It's the truth. Your father was ready to share with me everything he had — and so am I with you. It is not a *favor* I offer — but only what I believe is due to you.

ERNESTO. But Julian, such generous spirit — the world doesn't understand.

JULIAN [*snapping his fingers*]. *That* for the world! — If I disregard what I deem an obligation, what does the world give me for my lost peace of mind? After all, you see, I am selfish! When you're as old as I am — the prattle and tattle of the world — [*Starts to go*] Teodora will tell you what I think of it. — [*To* TEODORA] When Severo comes —I'm in the library. — [*To* ERNESTO] The world, indeed! [*Laughing*] You're young yet, Ernesto, very young!

[*He goes out*]

ERNESTO [*looking after* JULIAN]. Just the finest fellow — isn't he?

TEODORA. I think so — that's why I married him.

ERNESTO. Couldn't be kinder to me, if I were his son.

TEODORA [*with a stamp of her foot*]. Brother, if you please — Brother!

ERNESTO [*laughing*]. Of course, if you prefer, but it means the same.

TEODORA. No, it doesn't — not by a good many years. — You're going to the opera with us?

ERNESTO. Is there a place?

TEODORA. Surely — so when the story gets lost in the maze of the music, you can set us right. — You must know it by heart!

ERNESTO [*pointing to the book which* TEODORA *holds*]. Yes — as it's told there — in the 'Inferno,' — I read it very often.

TEODORA [*looking at the pages*]. Yes — this page shows — thumb-marked — and notes everywhere — in the margin. Here you've written — [*Peers at the page*] 'Poor Francesca!' 'Poor Paolo!' — And here —

ERNESTO [*reaching to take the book*]. Don't, Teodora — you'll hurt your eyes.

TEODORA [*retaining the book*]. No, I want to see the rest — [*Starts toward the balcony*]

ERNESTO. Some other time — it's getting dark.

TEODORA [*at the balcony-window*]. Light enough *here* — by the window. [*Reading*]. 'Blameless — both' — what does that mean?

ERNESTO. I forget now — idle, vagrant thoughts — scrawled, as I read. [*Turns to take the book*]

TEODORA [*drawing it away*]. But why 'Poor Paolo' — 'Poor Francesca'? *You pity* them?

ERNESTO. And don't you?

TEODORA. No — I — yes — *pity*, perhaps. But *'blameless' — No!*

ERNESTO. They loved — greatly — *'God-like,'* is Dante's word.

TEODORA. And 'God-like' they should have kept it — up there with the stars! — And not drag it down to earth — forgetting — disdaining — faith — loyalty — gratitude — pride — *That* was not 'God-like!'

ERNESTO. You are right, Teodora — but, now and then, Fate leads two weak humans, face to face, and says: 'You twain are mates' — 'You belong together, body and soul. — And when that happens — as with Francesca and Paolo — faith, loyalty, pride are vain words. Love doesn't heed them, nor hear them. When that happens — not only in poet's fancy, but the humdrum of every-day life — the maid, nobly bred, guarded like a priceless pearl, runs away with the picador; — a Princess of the line takes up with her street-fiddler; — the Queen leaves her throne for her ballad-monger —

[SEVERO *enters in time to hear the last part of the speech: he is not seen by* TEODORA *and* ERNESTO]

TEODORA. And they are *'blameless'*?

ERNESTO. Yes — because — *helpless.*

[*It has been gradually growing darker: the light of the setting sun now scarcely reaches beyond the point where* ERNESTO *and* TEODORA *stand*]

MERCEDES [*entering*]. Nobody here?

[TEODORA *and* ERNESTO, *absorbed in each other, do not hear*]

SEVERO. Wait — I'll ring for lights. [*He pushes the bell-button*]

MERCEDES [*catching sight of the others*]. But there is — [*Starts toward the balcony*]

SEVERO [*stopping her*]. No — don't disturb them.

MERCEDES [*sneeringly*]. *Together* — as usual.

SEVERO. And yet you wonder people talk — call it an outrage. [*Calls in a sharp tone*] Julian! [ERNESTO *and* TEODORA *turn quickly*]

TEODORA [*coming from the balcony*]. Oh, Mercedes! [*Kisses her*]

ERNESTO [*advancing*]. It's I, Don Severo.

SEVERO [*significantly*]. So I see — I thought, *of course*, it was Julian.

MERCEDES [*suspiciously*]. *What* were you two doing — in the dark?

TEODORA [*with book in hand*]. Reading.

MERCEDES. By *this* light? — We could hardly find our way in.

TEODORA. Oh, I forgot — [*Goes toward bell*]

SEVERO. I've rung. — Julian's out, *of course?*

TEODORA. No — in the library — he's expecting you.

SEVERO [*with intention*]. Yes — I have news for him.

MERCEDES. Take Don Ernesto — it may interest him.

ERNESTO. Julian will tell me — if he thinks I ought to know.

MERCEDES [*to* ERNESTO]. Has Don Julian arranged for the opera-box tonight?

TEODORA. He asked Pepito to look after it.

MERCEDES [*to* ERNESTO]. Won't you please make sure? — Pepito's so careless, you know. [*To* TEODORA] I want to talk with you.

TEODORA. Talk ahead.

MERCEDES. Alone, please. Get rid of him!

TEODORA [*in a tone of surprise*]. 'Get rid of —'

MERCEDES. If you don't, I shall —

TEODORA [*protesting*]. Why, my dear — [*Turns to* ERNESTO] Ernesto, Donna Mercedes has something to tell me.

ERNESTO [*starting to go*]. Oh, I beg —

TEODORA. — and asked me to 'get rid of' you —

MERCEDES [*embarrassed*]. But, Teo —

TEODORA. The *truth*, dear — it's so much simpler!

ERNESTO [*stopping at the door, and turning*]. Oh, Teodora, I've asked Captain Beaulieu to come to dinner. Do you mind?

TEODORA. No, glad to have him. Julian likes him. Dinner at seven. [ERNESTO *goes out. To* MERCEDES] Captain Beaulieu is military *attaché* at the British Legation.

MERCEDES. Yes, I've met him — And Ernesto — [*nods*] asks people to dinner? — [TEODORA *nods 'yes'*] Quite master-of-the-house, isn't he?

TEODORA. Why, of course. That's the way we want him to feel. His father and Julian — you know what friends they were. — Julian never tires talking of it. — Ernesto's as much at home here as Julian himself.

MERCEDES [*snappishly*]. Yes, *that's what they say.*

TEODORA. Good! Everything we have is at Ernesto's disposal, and we want the whole world to know it.

MERCEDES. Teo, you're either very ingenuous or very ingenious.

TEODORA. Sounds interesting — I wish I knew what it meant. [MERCEDES *looks at* TEODORA; *there is a troubled pause*]

TEODORA. Well, well — what is it? You look serious.

MERCEDES. It *is* serious.

TEODORA. Aha, you've been up to some mischief?

MERCEDES. No, but — my dear, you know I like you, don't you? — that I'm your friend?

TEODORA. Yes — but you didn't send Ernesto away to tell me *that!* — Now what's happened?

MERCEDES. I *hope* nothing has happened, I *pray* nothing will.

TEODORA [*impatiently*]. Don't keep me on the rack. What can happen — and to whom?

MERCEDES. To all three.

TEODORA. What three?

MERCEDES. The usual, and universal, three — the wife, the husband — and — another man.

TEODORA [*perplexedly*]. Another —?

MERCEDES. *The* other man — [*With a nod to indicate* ERNESTO]

TEODORA. Ernesto?

MERCEDES [*with elaborate relief*]. Thank you for guessing!

TEODORA [*laughing*]. Wasn't very hard with that — [*Repeats* MERCEDES' *nod. With sudden change of tone*] And *you're* in love with Ernesto?

MERCEDES [*looking at her closely*]. If I didn't know you to be a candid, straightforward woman, I'd say you were *fencing* — or worse!

TEODORA [*rising*]. And I'd say you were —

MERCEDES. Teodora — is it *possible* you don't know what they are saying?

TEODORA. Who are 'they'?

MERCEDES. Everybody — everybody — in our world — and half Madrid, besides.

TEODORA [*after a pause*]. And what do they say?

MERCEDES. That you are making a fool of Julian — you and Ernesto!

TEODORA [*aghast*]. Mercedes!

MERCEDES [*deliberately*]. *That's what they say*, Teo.

TEODORA [*rising*]. Ernesto and I — they say — ! [*After a pause*] Well — now the shock's over — it's so ridiculous — what they say — so supremely and sublimely wicked — that it's ridiculous —

MERCEDES. Then you care *nothing* for this man?

TEODORA. I like Ernesto — *like* him — better, I believe, than any man I know —

MERCEDES. Ah!

TEODORA. But I *love* Julian.

MERCEDES. Is there so much difference?

TEODORA [*impatiently*]. *Is* there! — Well — if you don't know the difference, I'm sorry for you — [*As an afterthought*] And your husband too. [*In a different tone*] I'd lay down my life for Julian, and you know it.

MERCEDES. *I* believe you — but out there — [*indicating the world without*] they don't. — They're *laughing* at Julian.

TEODORA. Laughing at him! I'd hate to be the one he catches at it!

MERCEDES [*with a gesture*]. He has only to reach out his hand — anywhere — at his club — in the Prado — at the opera. — And as for *you*, Teo —

TEODORA. Never mind me! That's no matter! — what they say! — A woman reckons only with God and her own conscience. But Julian — that pink of chivalry, with the pride of El Campeador! — Mercedes, it would kill him — *kill* him!

MERCEDES. Yes, and knowing that, Teo, feeling as you do, how could you be so — so —

TEODORA. What!

MERCEDES. Reckless — or indifferent — of what everyone thinks.

TEODORA. No, they *can't* —

MERCEDES. *Says*, then — comes to the same — and more! — It isn't what you *do*, nor what people *think* you do; it's what they *say* you do!

TEODORA. But no *right* — or reason —

MERCEDES. Oh, plenty of reason — this man constantly about you.

TEODORA. With *Julian!*

MERCEDES. No, *not* always. — Just now — when we came in — and found you — *bien-intime* — 'reading' — in the dusk — Julian wasn't with you —

TEODORA. But — here — in my *home* —

MERCEDES. And the servants?

TEODORA. The servants!

MERCEDES. Have eyes and ears just the same as the others.

TEODORA. And can see and hear no more than the others. [*Nods to indicate the world outside*] Oh, but, come, Mercedes — this is too much! The servants! I begin to believe you mean to humiliate me.

MERCEDES. No, but neither shall *he* — if we can help it — we who really care for you. Teodora, the fellow's unworthy of you — not fit to tie your — [*Points to* TEODORA'S *shoes*]

TEODORA [*turning sharply*]. Mercedes, I forbid you!

MERCEDES [*triumphantly*]. There, you see! — you flare at the first word against him.

TEODORA. Yes, a guest under our roof — Julian's closest friend — as dear to him almost as Severo — living with us in the frankest companionship — you expect me to listen — in patience — to the chatter of the servants' hall — the scandal of the streets.

MERCEDES. It is more than that — much more! This *preux-chevalier* whom you defend with such fire has compromised Julian ruinously.

TEODORA. Nonsense!

MERCEDES. Indeed! You know, perhaps, Julian's appointment has been held up?

TEODORA. Yes, he told me.

MERCEDES. And the reason?

TEODORA. He doesn't know —

MERCEDES. But *Severo* does — learned it just now at the Foreign Office. The gossip you make so light of — that you ridicule and despise — well, *there* they take it more seriously. You understand?

TEODORA. I begin to.

MERCEDES. At first they would tell Severo nothing — the usual diplomatic excuses and evasions. "A mere delay" — they put it. When Severo insisted — there were intimations, none too nice — shoulder shrugs — lifted eyebrows; — and then an attempt to make a *joke* of it all!

TEODORA. I can imagine that was enough for Severo!

MERCEDES. Yes. — He demanded that they come out into the open and tell him exactly what this treatment of his brother meant. — He demanded the truth — and he got it!

TEODORA [*contemptuously*]. The truth?

MERCEDES. Well, what they believe the truth. And in plain, blunt terms, without disguise or delicacy. — Is that enough, Teo?

TEODORA. No, go on.

MERCEDES. Well, the Capital to which Julian would be accredited, they explained, prides itself on its prim and precise social orders. None of our European ways! — The ménage-à-trois, with its attendant gossip and eventual divorce, is quite unknown. — In short, their social code, over there, is summed up in the Seventh Commandment — or so they tried to make Severo believe. They told of an Ambassador, from a Power much greater than Spain, practically given his *congé* because of some vague doubt regarding a member of his household. The Ambassador showed his Emperor's decree that proclaimed his protegée princess by title and heiress to all his estates. But even that didn't satisfy his strait-laced censors; and *Monsieur l'Ambassadeur* had himself transferred. — Now do you understand?

TEODORA [*bitterly*]. Quite well enough!

MERCEDES. Why did Julian insist on Ernesto's appointment — and why did you let him? Without that everything would have gone well. — They told Severo relations with the other country were still awkward and the Government could not risk a *contretemps*. — If here in Madrid, where we are not squeamish, this *ménage* is misunderstood — what chance to escape scandal over there?

TEODORA. If Julian should know!

MERCEDES. He must know. — Severo's come to tell him.

TEODORA [*protesting*]. But, first, let *me* see Julian. It is my right —

MERCEDES. His brother has the greater right.

[JULIAN *and* SEVERO *enter, talking vehemently*]

TEODORA [*rushing to* JULIAN]. Julian! JULIAN [*indicating* MERCEDES]. What has she been telling you?

MERCEDES. Just what Severo has been telling *you*.

JULIAN. Now, my good people, for this once I let it go, but you shall not —

SEVERO. We only tell you what they say —

JULIAN. They say — *they* say — who?

MERCEDES. Everyone — everywhere — all the world and his wife! —

JULIAN. They shall answer to us.

SEVERO. You can't fight all the world!

JULIAN. For Teodora, yes — all the world.

MERCEDES. Perhaps — but you can't fight his wife. — I've spoken to Teo only as I would to a loved sister whom I saw in danger.

JULIAN. If there *were* danger, I should be the first —

SEVERO. No, the *last* to see. It is always so! Shut your own eyes if you will, but you can't shut out the picture, here, for all the world to look at; the wife, young, beautiful, with a mind for moonlight and the mandolinata, and an idling, dreaming youth, who when he isn't lolling at her feet is mooning over love stories — or writing verses — for Teodora to read! A fine animal to let loose about the house while you're at your desk muddling over State affairs. — I'd as lief bring into *my* house the pet of the bull-ring!

JULIAN [*indignantly*]. Severo, you forget the presence of my wife —

SEVERO. No — nor that she bears our name — that her honor is our own. — Let him not forget it either — this fellow, Ernesto!

[ERNESTO *appears at the door in time to hear this: he is followed by* PEPITO]

ERNESTO [*as if to withdraw*]. I beg your pardon.

JULIAN. Come in —

PEPITO [*to* TEODORA]. Here are the tickets — the opera is 'Galeoto' — with a ballet, from Paris. Trala!

TEODORA. Thanks Pepito.

ERNESTO [*to* JULIAN]. What's happened?

JULIAN [*evasively*]. Why — why — why — what should happen?

ERNESTO. I don't know — but — I heard my name — and Teodora — she's been crying.

JULIAN. Women are given to that sort of thing, I believe.

ERNESTO. Not Teodora. What's wrong here?

TEODORA [*lightly*]. Nothing — nothing to speak of.

ERNESTO. Anything *I* can set right?

JULIAN [*as if to dismiss the subject*]. Whatever's wrong, *I* am here to set it right. — This is *her* affair and *mine*.

SEVERO [*significantly*]. And if need be I'll make it mine!

ERNESTO. You make it *mine*, too — when you take that tone with me. — Come, Julian, you have never yet denied me your confidence — and I *demand* it now — since it is *plain* the affair directly concerns me.

JULIAN. Forgive me — I've been greatly disturbed.

SEVERO [*to* ERNESTO]. It is the matter of his appointment.

ERNESTO. The delay?

SEVERO. There's more than delay — they threaten to withhold it entirely. *And because of you.*

ERNESTO. That trouble's easily gotten over. I never wished the post for which Julian urged me — all along intended to refuse it.

SEVERO. Then why didn't you?

ERNESTO. One doesn't decline a diplomatic post until it is *offered;* and I knew it would never come to that — I knew Don Alvarez' influence would prevent it.

SEVERO. He says your father ruined him — in prestige and fortune.

ERNESTO. Yes, he did. That's one of my proudest memories. Alvarez was of that precious crew of army contractors who sent our soldiers to Cuba and the Philippines with guns of tin instead of steel, with sand for powder, and stole their poor rations until they starved. My father brought him to book for it. Everyone knows that.

SEVERO. Yes — and if it were *only* Alvarez —

ERNESTO. Who else then?

SEVERO. A thousand others — half the town — every man and woman who has taken note of your position in this house. Surely, you have not been left in ignorance —

ERNESTO. Oh, no —

SEVERO [*to* JULIAN]. You see? [*To* ERNESTO] Then, even to *you* — ?

ERNESTO. Yes.

SEVERO. And you didn't strangle the wretch?

ERNESTO. I should have — only it was your son, Pepito.

SEVERO. Better he than another.

ERNESTO [*in a threatening tone*]. Better, perhaps, for you.

SEVERO. What do you mean? What do you mean? — [*Turns to* PEPITO] Pepito, take your mother — [*Motions them to leave*]

ERNESTO. Teodora, if you will —

TEODORA [*as if asking* JULIAN'S *permission*]. No — I'd rather remain — may I not, Julian?

JULIAN [*after a glance at* ERNESTO]. No — let it be as Ernesto wishes — [*Takes* TEODORA *to the door, and comes back*] Now we may as well have this out, once for all.

SEVERO. Now, sir, you mean? —

ERNESTO. I mean, Don Severo — [*At a glance from* TEODORA, *as she goes out, he softens his tones*] I mean that what I heard from Pepito — some absurd, some petty — and all infamous — might better come from anyone else than one of Julian's kinsmen. If I did not thrust the lie down the throat of him who only *repeated* it — carelessly, I know — half in jest, and with no conscious evil — it was because he *was* Julian's kin. I could not be so patient a second time, even with Julian's kinsmen. — That's what I mean, Don Severo.

JULIAN. And he's right. [SEVERO *starts as if angry;* JULIAN *continues more gently*] Oh, I know your devotion to me — the honesty of your motive — but if out there shameless persons make a gutter frolic of the reputation of an innocent woman and two honest men, at least let us shut our door against it. — Here, under my roof, I have my own eyes to look after my own affairs — and if need arises I have steel and my own right arm.

SEVERO. And it will come to that if we let it go on. Stop it — I say — stop it where it is.

JULIAN [*tensely*]. That we shall — you may be sure! And in a way all Madrid will ring with.

SEVERO [*appeasingly*]. No, no, no — that's just what we must avoid. — With calmness and prudence we must order this affair — like sensible men of the world — and not precipitate a *new* embarrassment. There is no need here of passion or violence — the matter is not beyond repair. [*Lightly*] As yet, it is nothing — *really* nothing!

ERNESTO [*with sardonic laughter, at first; then with rebuke, and crescent vehemence*]. 'Nothing'? 'Nothing,' indeed? To nag and torture him with doubts and suspicion — that is nothing? You hurry to him with every new invention of scandal and slander — but that is nothing! You din into his ears the malicious prattle of club, café, the very street corner — and that is nothing? You tell him he is threatened with shame and dishonor — destroy his peace of mind — kill his faith in everything he holds dearest and sweetest — the wife adored — the friend cherished — and that is nothing! You drag into his house the mire of the streets — stamp it on his hearthstone — and when you have maddened him by the infamy, you bid him 'be calm' because 'it is nothing' — 'really nothing'! Look — [*pointing to* JULIAN] his face drawn by anguish — and the tears we saw in Teodora's eyes — they are *nothing?*

SEVERO. No, not to you — else you'd end it all.

ERNESTO. I'll hunt out these traducers — I only wait Julian's word — to begin with them.

SEVERO. There's a simpler way and a quicker one — leave here!

JULIAN [*coming between them*]. Severo, *I* am master in this house —

SEVERO [*waving* JULIAN *aside; to* ERNESTO]. *Leave here!* That will end it!

ERNESTO. Right! I leave this house to-day. I leave the country the moment my affairs are arranged.

JULIAN. And I forbid one and both. — What! Justify their slander — lend color to their lies, by running away? Let them think they've frightened us — or shamed us? What has come over you, Don Severo — to suggest such a course? [*To* ERNESTO] You remain here — with us — and our life goes on as before. — *Just* as before!

ERNESTO. That is impossible, Julian. Things will never again be as they were. For no fault of our own — for nothing *we* have done — or should ever do — those dear days are over. There's come into our lives a subtle, insidious, venomous poison, stronger than we are — stronger than our faith, our trust, stronger even than our friendship. — That is the meanest part of calumny — you fight it — you *vanquish* it — but you carry a scar [*beats his heart*] that never heals! — Don Severo is right — it is for me to go.

SEVERO. Without question — and

without delay. — [*Disdainfully*] And if you haven't the ready means, my brother will supply them.

ERNESTO [*indignantly*]. Don Severo, you seem bent on insulting me! — You are Julian's brother, and I love him — but you presume too far —

JULIAN [*interposing*]. No, no — he meant kindly. — I'm sure my brother doesn't forget what I owe Ernesto's father.

SEVERO. Repay it, then — as freely as you like — but not at the price of our place before the world — and your career.

JULIAN [*impatiently*]. I'll not listen to you. [*Starts to leave*]

ERNESTO [*stopping him*]. But you must, Julian — there's no going back now — the mischief has been done. [JULIAN *makes a gesture of protest*] Oh, yes — the very words he has just spoken — the fact that we've had to hear them — proves it — and that we, in turn, speak of them, proves it the more. — It were folly for you and me to ignore a foe that has already disarmed us, even before we dreamed of attack, and put us at the mercy of malice and *stupidity!* [*The last word is thrown at* SEVERO]

SEVERO. Call it what you please! — But I will stop at nothing, I warn you, to end a condition I believe dangerous to Julian's happiness and position.

SERVANT [*announcing*]. Captain Beaulieu.

JULIAN [*to* SERVANT]. Yes — show Captain Beaulieu in — then tell Madame. [SERVANT *goes out. After a slight pause*]. Now, see to what we have come here! Misunderstanding — bitterness — ugly words, where before was good-will, and cheer, and good-fellowship. — And all through the idle gossip of people who care nothing for us — and we less for them. — Now let's have an end of it — and of your talk of leaving us!

[CAPTAIN BEAULIEU *enters;* JULIAN *crosses to greet him*]

BEAULIEU [*to* JULIAN]. So glad of this chance to see you before you leave. When do you go?

JULIAN. That rests with the Foreign Office, Captain.

[JULIAN, *at a nod from* SEVERO, *joins the latter on the balcony where they walk to and fro, in animated conversation*]

BEAULIEU [*to* ERNESTO]. How stands the Embassy matter?

ERNESTO [*confused*]. Why — I — don't quite know —

BEAULIEU. Still wabbles, eh?

ERNESTO. I believe so.

BEAULIEU. I thought as much.

ERNESTO [*alert*]. You've heard something?

BEAULIEU [*glances toward the others*]. No, no, but when I came in — I thought I smelt powder. — But that may be only this over-sensitive, diplomatic nose of mine. — Of course, we never mix up in these matters — officially — but you know I'm awfully fond of Don Julian and you and Donna Teodora — and I like Donna Mercedes and little Pepito — all the family in fact, with possibly one exception — whom, of course, I won't mention by name, except to say I'd never take him for Don Julian's brother. But you know who's making all the trouble, don't you?

ERNESTO. Do *you*, Captain?

BEAULIEU. Everyone does — it's the Marquis Alvarez. He's been pulling wires at our Legation — or, rather, trying to. — But he got precious little satisfaction — and I dropped a hint if that sort of work went on, I'd go to the Queen — she's English, God bless her! — and ask fair play for Julian.

ERNESTO. Thank you — you're very good.

BEAULIEU. And you won't mind a bit of counsel, from a fellow who likes you?

ERNESTO. I'll be grateful.

BEAULIEU. Well, then — don't let Alvarez *draw* you.

ERNESTO. Draw? — What do you mean?

BEAULIEU. Don't play into his hands by an open quarrel. That's his game — from what I gather — to push matters to an explosion — and involve Julian in the crash —

ERNESTO. Yes, so it would seem. — But it's really at *me* he's striking — over *Julian's* head —

BEAULIEU [*as if enlightened*]. Oho! That complicates matters.

ERNESTO. On the contrary — simplifies them. — Alvarez will quiet down the moment I'm out of the way.

BEAULIEU [*surprised*]. 'Out of the way!' — Where are you going, boy?

ERNESTO. South America — the Rio Plata region.

BEAULIEU [*gaily*]. The Argentine!

I've been there. Delightful country! — Almost as many rainy days as London. — Jolly lot of people — and excellent beef! [*With sudden change to seriousness*] And *when* did this happen?

ERNESTO. Oh, some time ago I decided on leaving Madrid. — My father had interests out there — mines and a tea-plantation — and I'm going to look up the stray ends of the estate —

BEAULIEU. Soon?

ERNESTO. I'm sailing in a week or two, at the latest.

BEAULIEU [*impulsively*]. Good! [*Correcting himself*] I beg your pardon — [TEODORA *and* MERCEDES, *followed by* PEPITO, *appear at the balcony-entrance*] You understand?

ERNESTO. Of course — and — thanks!

[BEAULIEU *goes to meet* TEODORA *and* MERCEDES]

PEPITO [*comes down to* ERNESTO *and leans across the table, half whispering*]. You're not angry with me?

ERNESTO. No, no, boy, of course not — you meant no harm.

PEPITO. Only told you those things, to put you on your guard.

ERNESTO. Yes, yes, it's all right. [*Turns to go*]

PEPITO [*persisting*]. And after all — you can't help it — you and Teo — if you've come to care for each other.

ERNESTO [*hardly suppressing his frenzy*]. By God! Pepito! Don't you say that — ever again — or anything like it!

TEODORA [*entering, to* CAPTAIN BEAULIEU]. So glad Don Ernesto thought to ask you to dine with us.

BEAULIEU. And I. Most of the Legation people are *Envacances*. I don't know what to do with myself evenings.

TEODORA. Then maybe you'll come on to the opera with us?

BEAULIEU. For your charming company — thanks. — What particular form does the trouble take to-night?

TEODORA [*perplexed*]. Why? —

BEAULIEU. One of my stock jokes, dear lady. — What's the opera, I mean?

TEODORA. 'Galeoto.'

BEAULIEU. Don't know it — new?

TEODORA. Quite — the season's one novelty.

BEAULIEU. One o' those awful made-in-Germany affairs?

TEODORA. Oh, no — Italy — the new school.

BEAULIEU. Heavy?

TEODORA. *Au contraire.* [*Music is heard through the balcony windows*] There, that answers you! The street bands have it now — and the barrel-organs in a week.

[*All listen for a few seconds to the music*]

BEAULIEU. Yes, I think I'm up to that.

SEVERO. Do you have much opera in London?

BEAULIEU. Not enough to hurt, thank Heaven! You know there never was a people who loved music who could fight.

MERCEDES. Oh, Captain — the Germans, *they* love music.

BEAULIEU. Oh, but bless you, dear lady, what they think is music *isn't* music — [*with assurance*] *not as we English understand music!*

TEODORA. The Russians, then? Their composers are doing wonders — running away from their rivals.

BEAULIEU. They did that at Port Arthur, too, and at Mukden — as many as could get away. — No — the best fighters we English ever met were the Boers — and can you imagine a Dutch Boer singing grand-opera or playing the harp?

SEVERO [*proudly*]. But we Spaniards also love music.

BEAULIEU [*disconcerted for a moment*]. Ah, thank you — the *exception* that proves my rule. — Until this moment I never could think of one. [*To* TEODORA]. Tell me — the opera to-night — in Spanish?

TEODORA. Oh, no, the original — you know Italian?

BEAULIEU. Not much — Vostra Eccelenza — and Bella Signorina — and of course, Chianti and that sort of thing. — What's it about?

TEODORA. Oh, no, that'll spoil the surprise.

BEAULIEU. Yes, but I'll spoil your evening, with no end of questions — and have them hissing at our box.

TEODORA. It's the story of Francesca and Paolo.

BEAULIEU. I'm lost again.

ERNESTO. The same story as your English Launcelot and Guinevere.

BEAULIEU. Oh, yes, I remember them — never could spell their names right. — But I don't recall the 'Galeoto' Johnny!

TEODORA. He's in *Dante's* story.

BEAULIEU. The usual 'other fellow,' eh? — Sings tenor?

ERNESTO. No, Galeoto is the go-between — the mischief-maker. He brings Francesca and Paolo the gossip of the Court — the quips and jests and wanton rhymes that play about them. — To each in turn, he tells the general report of the other's love — meaning no harm, of course! Oh, no! — And when they flout his story — he says, 'Look about you! What does that side-glance mean, as you pass, the nudge — the grin — the shrug of shoulder — the flippant word thrown after?' Little by little he has Francesca and Paolo seriously concerned, — at first each for self, and then for each other!

TEODORA [*lightly*]. That's the *crux* of the opera!

BEAULIEU [*approvingly*]. Pretty idea!

ERNESTO [*continuing with more fervor*]. In the end, you see a man and woman, at first indifferent, thrown into each other's arms, utterly despite themselves, by the subtle, insidious, fiendish power of trifles. — The arch passion flaming up in souls that, *unfanned by scandal*, would have flickered on forever, harmlessly, innocently — *ignorant* of evil — except for 'Galeoto' —

SEVERO. Who, if the truth were known, only did his duty.

BEAULIEU. Well, I call him a rotter, a perfect rotter! — Sings bass, I'll wager.

SEVERO [*drily*]. For all that, Captain, the world will always believe 'where there's smoke there's fire.'

BEAULIEU. Yes — but what the world takes for *smoke* is very often nothing but *dust* kicked up by a lot of busybodies. [*Turning to* ERNESTO] I thought I smelt powder!

[FOOTMEN *draw aside the curtains of the balcony-doors, disclosing the dinner-table, splendid with silver, candelabra and flowers. Suspended above the table is a large antique lantern*]

FIRST FOOTMAN [*advancing*]. Dinner is served!

[TEODORA, ERNESTO, CAPTAIN BEAULIEU *and* PEPITO *walk slowly toward the balcony, chatting animatedly. They stop by the open doors*]

MERCEDES [*to* JULIAN]. Oh, we dine on the balcony?

JULIAN. You think it's too cool?

MERCEDES. No, but — [*In a lower voice*] Where everyone can see?

JULIAN [*with a surprised look at* SEVERO]. Well, upon my word!

SEVERO. You know the Alvarez live just across the street.

MERCEDES [*with a nod toward* ERNESTO *and* TEODORA]. And they watch every little thing that goes on here.

JULIAN. Well, what of it? What goes on here they shouldn't see? They or anyone else. — [MERCEDES *shrugs her shoulders*] Do you suppose I'm going to alter my house, my ways — because loose tongues and light minds choose to —

MERCEDES. No, of course not! But since they are all so eager to talk, why give them any excuse, even the flimsiest?

JULIAN. If for nothing else, to show how we despise their talk — how little it touches us. — This house might be of glass for all they could see to our discredit. [*Calling*] Captain Beaulieu, will you take in the Donna Mercedes? [BEAULIEU *gives his arm to* MERCEDES] Ernesto — [ERNESTO *continues in lively conversation with* TEODORA, *and takes no notice*] [*In a louder tone*] Ernesto! [ERNESTO *still does not hear*] [*Calling again with some temper*] Ernesto!

ERNESTO [*lightly, turning and coming to him*]. Hello, what is it?

JULIAN. I called you three times.

ERNESTO. I beg pardon — I didn't hear — we were so interested —

JULIAN. Evidently — yes!

ERNESTO [*after a pause*]. Well, well, Julian — what do you wish?

JULIAN [*looking at him closely*]. Why — take in Teodora! [ERNESTO *and* TEODORA *join the others on the balcony*]

JULIAN [*to* SEVERO, *after a pause*]. What do you suppose they were talking about?

SEVERO [*viciously*]. 'Galeoto,' of course!

JULIAN [*gazing after them*]. Did you notice — he didn't hear me?

SEVERO. You called him only three times.

JULIAN. Yes, three times I had to call him. — I wonder why — h'm — Severo, *why?* [*Seizes* SEVERO'S *hand, tensely*]

SEVERO [*with a smile of triumph*]. Ah, you're beginning to see — at last!

JULIAN [*pulling himself together. Passes his right hand over his brow as if to get rid of an ugly thought*]. No, no, no! [*Drops* SEVERO'S *hand excitedly*]

There's nothing to see. Only for a moment — God forgive me — I caught your madness —

TEODORA [*calling from the balcony*]. Julian!

JULIAN. Come — they're waiting — and, brother, [*lightly*] never again, if you love me, one word of these — phantoms! [*laughingly*] — phantoms!

[*There is animated chatter and laughter at the table*]

ACT II

The scene is ERNESTO'S *lodgings, in a small hotel attached to a popular café. The furnishings, though meagre and time-worn, give the room the air of a studio. Double doors at the right lead to the public hallway: at the back, towards the left, is a similar door opening into the bedroom, while towards the right there is a casement window, with a striped awning, and a flower-box on the sill. On the left, a door leads into a corridor which is set at an angle.*

The general appearance of the room indicates preparations for ERNESTO'S *departure: the bookcases are almost emptied of their contents, and the mantelpiece stripped of pictures and photographs. On the floor are trunks and boxes, some open, some closed and strapped. Clothes and other articles are scattered about.*

When the curtain rises, ERNESTO *is putting books and papers in a travelling bag.* GENARO *enters, humming or singing the waltz from "Galeoto," which the band is playing in the café garden below. He breaks off the song instantly on seeing* ERNESTO.

ERNESTO. Who is it, Genaro?

GENARO. The young Don Pepito.

PEPITO [*entering briskly*]. Are you in, Ernesto?

ERNESTO. Of course, boy!

PEPITO [*indicating* GENARO]. He wasn't certain — Beaulieu's waiting below. — [*Goes to the door and calls out*] Captain! Only one more flight! [*Signals to him*]

ERNESTO [*to* GENARO]. Ask Captain Beaulieu to be good enough to come up — and, Genaro, close the window —

GENARO. Excellent music, to-day, sir.

PEPITO. They're playing 'Galeoto.'

ERNESTO. Yes, yes — but I don't care to hear it, to-day — [GENARO, *in response to a gesture from* ERNESTO, *closes the window and goes out*]

PEPITO [*with feeling*]. No more do I, Ernesto — [*Noting the preparations for departure*] Can't that wait?

ERNESTO. No — they'll be coming for the trunks, presently. — Why?

PEPITO. Oh, I don't know — but somehow — [*Touches his eye furtively*] I don't like to see you — When do you go?

ERNESTO. To-night — I leave Madrid — forever!

PEPITO [*protesting*]. Oh, no!

ERNESTO [*firmly*]. Yes, Pepito — *forever!* [GENARO *is heard singing*] There's Beaulieu.

BEAULIEU [*heard speaking to* GENARO]. All right — I'll find my way. [*Enters breathing hard and fanning himself*] Regular song-bird, isn't he, that landlord? What's the idea?

ERNESTO. An old custom of the house, he says — handed down from father to son.

BEAULIEU [*throwing himself in a chair, wearily*]. Pretty idea! [*Fanning himself*] By Jove, three years in India take it out of a fellow!

PEPITO [*chaffingly*]. Not you! At an Embassy ball I've seen you dance half the men off the floor.

BEAULIEU. Oh, that's in the line of *duty*, my boy. [*Crosses to* ERNESTO] But climbing three flights of stairs to bid *bon voyage* to a fellow you're fond of, is mere *pleasure!*

ERNESTO. Really, Captain?

BEAULIEU. Well, you know what I mean. — But I'm hoping Julian may induce you to change your plans.

ERNESTO. Nothing could induce me to remain in Madrid.

BEAULIEU. But go *with him*, I mean. — The Embassy matter's settled, you know.

ERNESTO [*somewhat embarrassed*]. No — I — I — haven't seen Julian for some days. — I must send him a line at once — to tell him how glad I am — [*Sits at the desk preparing to write*] He might have let me know. [*Writes*]

BEAULIEU. It was announced only this morning — at least, we only got the news then at our Legation.

ERNESTO [*as he writes*]. Thank you for bringing me word. It will lighten my dismal journey immensely. For all his seeming *not to care*, I know Julian's heart was set on this appointment.

PEPITO. And he can thank *you* for it.

ERNESTO [*laughing*]. How on earth do *I* figure in it?

PEPITO. Just because you're *out* of it. Why, the moment it got about that you weren't going as Secretary, all opposition ended, and Julian's appointment was confirmed. Isn't that so, Captain?

BEAULIEU [*curtly*]. Don't know anything about it.

PEPITO. Well, anyway, that's what they say.

ERNESTO [*sealing the note*]. Oh, 'that's what they say?' [*Rises*]

PEPITO. Yes, and they say, too — Alvarez is raging! — You've cut the ground from under his feet.

ERNESTO [*to* BEAULIEU]. You see I was right, Captain.

BEAULIEU [*nodding*]. I suppose so. — I say, it's to Buenos Ayres you're going?

ERNESTO. For a while, yes.

BEAULIEU. I've brought you letters to some people out there — may be of service — until you get acquainted. — [*Running through three or four letters*] These chaps'll put you up at a club or two — and this letter's to my sister and her husband — he's in our Legation there. Trump of a fellow!

ERNESTO [*deeply moved*]. Letters to your people! — Beaulieu, I don't dare to tell you how grateful I am —

PEPITO [*exuberantly*]. I'll do it for you — [*Takes a step toward* BEAULIEU] Captain, if you were a Spaniard, like Ernesto and myself — I'd kiss you.

BEAULIEU [*retreating*]. Pretty idea! — But there's nothing Spanish in my family!

PEPITO. I'm going to tell my father what you've done.

BEAULIEU. Pretty idea, too! [*With some temper*] But I don't think you need bother.

PEPITO [*with feeling*]. Oh, don't blame my father for what's happened — [*To* ERNESTO]. You don't, Ernesto?

ERNESTO [*with kindness*]. No one's to blame — and nothing has happened.

PEPITO. It *would* have — if you'd stayed here — and the talk kept up. There was bound to be a quarrel with *somebody*.

ERNESTO [*bitterly*]. Yes, with *somebody*.

PEPITO. Alvarez, probably.

ERNESTO [*listlessly*]. Yes — Alvarez —

PEPITO. And my father wanted to avoid that.

BEAULIEU [*explosively*]. Then, why in thunder didn't he mind his own — [*With a sudden change of tone, as if to himself*] Pretty idea — why don't *I*?

ERNESTO [*as if explaining to* BEAULIEU]. After all, Don Severo may really believe he's acting for the best.

PEPITO. My father's of the old school — he hasn't travelled, Beaulieu, like you and I — hasn't seen the world — the great world. Some of his notions I don't approve —

BEAULIEU [*chaffingly*]. No?

PEPITO. Wears low collars at the opera — and won't have the champagne iced. — But, between ourselves, here — I'm not so certain he's wrong in this matter.

ERNESTO [*pausing in his work of putting things in a trunk*]. What do you mean, Pepito?

PEPITO. Well, of course, the world says you mustn't watch your wife — or keep a curb on her. — You must let her do as she pleases. Because, if you don't, she will, anyway — and a bit more so! Well, some fine morning — or evening — she *does do* as she pleases, and *then* the world says: 'Well, it served her husband right! What could he expect? He always let her do just as she pleased!'

GENARO [*entering*]. A messenger from Señor Moreno.

ERNESTO. Yes?

GENARO. He's waiting for you at the Alcazar *Café*.

ERNESTO. Yes — say I'll be over at once. — And, have this sent immediately. [GENARO *goes out*]

BEAULIEU [*questioning*]. Moreno? Who's he?

ERNESTO. The steamship agent — to arrange about my ticket and baggage — [*Takes his hat as if to go*] I won't be long —

PEPITO [*stopping him*]. The Alcazar! Oh, don't go over there —

ERNESTO. But I've an appointment —

PEPITO. Well, I'll go for you —

ERNESTO. But — why?

PEPITO. You're sure to run into Alvarez and his crowd — they're always there —

ERNESTO. Well? —

BEAULIEU. Pepito's right. — Let him go for you.

ERNESTO. Nonsense! I'll only be there a few minutes.

BEAULIEU. Well, then, I'll go with you.

ERNESTO [*fondly, with arm on* BEAULIEU's *shoulder*]. Dear old Beaulieu —

[*Laughing lightly*] You'd think I was still a boy.

BEAULIEU. Gad! You Latin fellows never get over being boys. Come along!

ERNESTO [*at the door*]. Pepito, while I'm gone, you might throw some things in that chest for me — those books [*points to the books on the table*] — the pictures [*points to the pictures on the cabinet*] — any odds and ends — if you will. — And, Pepito, in the room at the end of that corridor [*goes to the door on the left, and indicates room*] — you'll find my foils and fencing traps — will you fetch them, like a good fellow?

[*Goes out with* BEAULIEU]

PEPITO. Yes, I'll have them ready. [*He gathers together various articles from the table and bookcases and puts them in the travelling-chest and trunks. Now and then he stops and listens to the music heard very faintly from the café below. He goes to the window, and opens it, so that the music is heard more distinctly. Going to the cabinet, he picks up two or three picture-frames and looks at them*] Ernesto's father — Don Florio — [*Looks at another*] One of me — taken in Havana — Don Julian — and the frame's mate empty. Teo's picture used to be there. Well, he's right — better keep reminders out of sight. [*Puts frames in one of the chests. Picks up a book from the table near-by, and reads the title — 'Dante: The Divine Comedy.' A photograph falls from the book. He picks it up, and looks at it*] H'm — Teo — Trala, she *is* a beauty! I don't wonder Julian is in love with her. [*Pause*] And it wouldn't be a wonder if *Ernesto* — We'll put it back in the book — [*As he does so he notices writing on the back of the picture*] Verses — Ernesto's writing — No — not verses — [*Reads*] 'Now and then, Fate leads two weak humans face to face, and says, "You twain are mates" — "You belong together — body and soul." — And when that happens — as with Francesca and Paolo — faith, loyalty, pride are vain words. Love doesn't heed them, nor even hear them. When that happens —' [GENARO *is heard singing*] [*Continuing, as he puts the picture in the book and throws the book into a trunk, which he closes with a bang*] 'When that happens' — trunks can't be packed too quickly! [*Goes out hastily through the door opening into the corridor*]

[GENARO *enters, humming or singing as usual, followed by* JULIAN *and* SEVERO]

JULIAN [*looking about*]. Don Ernesto is out?

GENARO. Would seem so. [*Resumes singing and crosses to the door of the bedroom, looking in*] Not in his bedroom, either. He must just have gone.

SEVERO [*annoyed by the singing*] If you please, my good fellow —

GENARO [*turning*]. I beg pardon, a custom of the house — a custom of the house, sir — understood by our regular guests, and I believe appreciated.

JULIAN. Don Ernesto is expected back soon?

GENARO. Doubtless — at least, I hope so. [*Holds up a letter*] Here's a message — just come — marked 'urgent.'

JULIAN. We'll wait!

[PEPITO *enters, carrying fencing foils, masks, etc.*]

SEVERO [*surprised*]. You here?

PEPITO. Helping Ernesto pack his traps. [*To* JULIAN] You wish to see him?

JULIAN. At once.

GENARO. I'll send word to the Alcazar Café.

[PEPITO *puts foils in case*]

PEPITO [*turning*]. He's gone to meet the steamship agent about his baggage and tickets.

JULIAN. You go — tell him we are here — ask him to come as soon as possible. [*Recalls* PEPITO] And, Pepito, tell him he's to cancel his steamship ticket — stop preparations for leaving — he's not going — [*with a glance at* SEVERO] tell him *I* said so. — Be quick about it.

PEPITO. I'll run every step. [*Goes out hastily*]

SEVERO [*recalling* GENARO, *who is about to follow* PEPITO]. Don Ernesto is sailing?

GENARO. To-morrow.

SEVERO [*as if to himself*]. Good.

GENARO. His trunks are 'most ready now. He goes to-night to Cadiz — there takes the steamer *El Cid* for Buenos Ayres.

SEVERO [*half to himself*]. Fresh wind to his sail and good speed!

GENARO. You are friends of Don Ernesto? [SEVERO *makes a sign of impatience*]

JULIAN. Yes, oh, yes.

GENARO. Well, permit me to say, gentlemen, your friend is a gentleman. You may take my word for it. A complete gentleman.

SEVERO. In Don Ernesto's name we thank you.

GENARO. Yes, gentlemen, a complete gentleman. Even though he drinks little wine and that rather cheap, he is a gentleman — you may take my word for it — no matter what they say. — Of course, a person in my position is in the way of hearing a lot of *gossip*. [JULIAN *crosses the room as if to get out of hearing of what is likely to follow.*] But I know enough not to repeat the stuff. — They say for instance — they say —

SEVERO. Yes, they say?

JULIAN [*as if to dismiss* GENARO]. We don't care what they say.

GENARO. No more do I, sir. He's young, clever, good-looking and if, *as they say* — [*he places the sealed note on the table, so that it can be readily seen by* SEVERO] some charming lady chooses to make a fool of her old husband, why — I'm sure Don Ernesto will show himself — a — a — perfect gentleman. You may take my word for it, gentlemen.

JULIAN [*with a gesture of dismissal*]. Yes, we'll take your word if you'll be good enough to take your leave.

GENARO [*takes the sherry-decanter from the buffet, and puts it on the table*]. Certainly. — A glass of Xeres, perhaps, while you wait?

JULIAN. No, thank you. — If you'll tell Don Ernesto as soon as he enters —

GENARO. Certainly. — And will the gentlemen call the young gentleman's attention to this note — here on the table? It came just after he'd gone.

[*Goes out*]

JULIAN [*looking after* GENARO, *and then at* SEVERO]. 'They say' — 'they say!' —

SEVERO [*takes the note and thrusts it under* JULIAN'S *eyes*]. Do you wonder?

JULIAN [*surprised*]. Teodora!

SEVERO [*turning the letter*]. Her writing — her seal!

JULIAN [*takes the letter and looks at it dubiously*]. After all — a farewell.

SEVERO [*cynically*]. Rubbish. — A rendezvous!

JULIAN [*savagely*]. Severo — is there no limit to your —

SEVERO [*as if in challenge*]. Read it — *read* it!

JULIAN [*as if to break the seal of the letter*]. Yes, if only to prove — No! [*Puts the letter back on the table*] That were the last meanness!

SEVERO. Then give it back — unopened — or I shall. [*Approaches the letter*]

JULIAN [*interposing*]. It isn't yours to dispose of — nor mine. — Leave it! I'm not afraid.

SEVERO. But, by God, I *am* afraid, I own it.

JULIAN. And I, too, am afraid —

SEVERO. Then, why —

JULIAN. But Teodora shall not *know* I'm afraid. For I'm not afraid of her — of her love — her loyalty. — But I *am* afraid of myself — of you — and Mercedes — Pepito — afraid of what all this fear — and doubt — suspicion — and questioning may work with her. [SEVERO *makes a gesture of impatience*]

JULIAN [*continuing*]. Most of all afraid lest she discover that my heart shelters this story that my lips deny and my intelligence rejects. — I know Teodora — as no one else knows her. She is the proudest creature in the world — if I *must* lose her love, I'll take good care not to gain her contempt.

SEVERO. There's something worse!

JULIAN. No, *that's* the worst! Severo, a woman may despise her lover, and still love him, but once she despises her husband! —

SEVERO. Despise, indeed! Because you act the part of prudence and common sense — because you shut out temptation — opportunity — from a wife, young, beautiful and damnably romantic. — In such a case, caution is not cowardice — it's a compliment.

JULIAN. To a woman like Teodora, it's an insult. She's shown it — from the moment that man left us —

SEVERO. He went of his own accord.

JULIAN. But *I* let him go — when I should have barred the door, and said 'No, no, I forbid it! The stories are lies! These dangers are phantoms conjured by mischief or malice. — They'll scurry back to the hell from which they came, if we but look them straight in the face' — *that*, Severo, would have been the thing to do.

SEVERO. No! *C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre!* — Yes, if Teodora didn't love him — and he her.

JULIAN [*approaching* SEVERO, *almost threateningly*]. Have you gone mad?

You believe that? [*Turns*] No! No! [*Throws himself in a chair*]

SEVERO [*coldly*]. It is no kindness to keep the truth from you now. You are fighting not only lies and phantoms — that were easy enough! — but there's come into the hearts of this man and woman a resistless and relentless longing —

JULIAN [*appealingly*]. No, brother.

SEVERO. Your courage and chivalry — her pride — Ernesto's faith — if he have any — mean nothing now. *They love.*

JULIAN. No, no, you are wrong — Ask Mercedes —

SEVERO. *You* ask Mercedes. Trust a woman to read *that* secret.

JULIAN [*rises*]. And I let him go. And you — *you* — my brother, who vows he loves and honors me — you stood by and saw me fall into that abyss of infamy and folly. — You urged — *demanded* — that he go!

SEVERO. Yes, and I'll not know an hour's peace until he's gone.

JULIAN. And I'll not know a *moment's* peace, *after* he's gone.

SEVERO. For all that, he must go! [*Sits at the table*]

JULIAN. No, he must stay!

SEVERO. But, why — if she loves him — why?

JULIAN [*with anger, and rebelliously*]. *That's why!* — If I send him away I send her heart and her soul with him — if what you say is true. There remains here, with me, the empty form of a woman — who shudders at my approach — whose lips chill under mine — whose arms deny response to my embrace — whose eyes, cold and pitiless, will never know a tear except for him — the lover, forced from her by the husband, jealous and disdained! Severo — I'm a proud man, with reverence for the name I bear, but rather than that torture — *dishonor!*

SEVERO. But with him away, your house is safe. — And your career, too! Events at the Foreign Office make that clear enough; the instant he's eliminated, your appointment's confirmed!

JULIAN. Yes — and on such terms, though only implied, I declined it! — I'll make no compromise with slander — not for an Embassy to the Kingdom of Heaven! — And as for Ernesto —[*Sits opposite* SEVERO] He stays, I tell you! I can fight the man of flesh and blood — fight him with my perfect faith — my devotion to her, my adoration, but I *can't* fight the ideal creature she would raise up to take his place once he's gone from here. I can fight the *man* — I can't fight the martyr, haloed by her imagination and her pity. — He stays — and I *fight!*

SEVERO [*grimly*]. You'll lose.

JULIAN. No, no!

SEVERO. Alas! Yes — you'll lose!

JULIAN [*hitting the table with his hand*]. Be it then! — I *lose* — if some purpose of God or devil wills it so. — But I lose to a *man* — not a shadow!

[BEAULIEU *and* PEPITO *enter*]

PEPITO [*to* BEAULIEU, *indicating* JULIAN *and* SEVERO]. Oh, they're still here —

BEAULIEU [*to* JULIAN *and* SEVERO]. Waiting for Ernesto?

SEVERO. To take our leave. — [*With a glance at* JULIAN] He's *going* tonight!

PEPITO. If he's lucky! [BEAULIEU *nudges* PEPITO *and motions 'silence'*]

JULIAN [*seeing the movement*]. Lucky!

PEPITO [*confused*]. I — I — mean if nothing stops him.

SEVERO [*decisively*]. Nothing will stop him.

BEAULIEU. I wish I felt as certain about it.

SEVERO. You may.

BEAULIEU. Oh, I've seen him with the foils — this Alvarez.

JULIAN [*alert*]. Alvarez! Ernesto and he —

PEPITO [*stammering*]. Why, yes, but — but — you weren't to know.

JULIAN. But now we *do* know. They've quarrelled — where?

PEPITO. At the Alcazar — before a crowd —

SEVERO. The shame of it! — Ernesto sought the —

BEAULIEU. No, no! Did his best to avoid it. Had an appointment there, some business about his sailing. Alvarez and his friends had just risen to go when they caught sight of Ernesto — they turned from their table to take another near ours — and then they began! —

JULIAN. Yes, go on —

BEAULIEU [*shrugs his shoulders*]. Oh, you know that crowd — what they can do, what they can say, over a table; kill a reputation between every cigarette puff and bring on a fresh victim with every change of glasses. Under their hands the marble slab becomes a dis-

secting board. And when they've done, it might better serve as a tombstone for the good names they've ruined.

SEVERO. Ernesto should have left —

JULIAN [*thunderingly*]. No! No!

BEAULIEU. He tried every way to avoid them — pretended not to notice. Looked only at Pepito and me — chattered like a magpie about everything and nothing — the weather, the opera, the ship he's sailing on. But Alvarez wouldn't have it — laughed in his face, raised his voice, pointed at him! — I changed my place so as to get between him and Ernesto — and with that the cur cried out — a name!

PEPITO. Yes, so everyone heard — the whole roomful!

BEAULIEU. No holding Ernesto after that!

JULIAN. He struck him, then?

PEPITO. No, not yet — he wanted to be sure, *quite* sure. He crossed to Alvarez' table, quivering like a leaf, so he could hardly speak. 'Who dares,' he asked, 'ridicule an honourable man?' '*You*, his *friend*,' — Alvarez shouted — 'you do — you, and the Donna' —

JULIAN. Teodora — Great God!

BEAULIEU. No, he didn't say it! His lips closed with Ernesto's blow.

SEVERO. With glove?

PEPITO [*interrupting gleefully*]. 'Glove' nothing! tout-à-fait Anglais — Le boxe — bing! [*With a gesture indicating a stiff blow on the chin*] [*To* BEAULIEU.] The upper slice, eh?

BEAULIEU. Cut, upper cut.

PEPITO [*continuing*]. Alvarez clean over the table — on the floor — glasses, bottles, chairs. His friends put him on his feet — and in ten minutes all the details were arranged.

JULIAN [*joyously*]. Good! And Ernesto's seconds?

PEPITO. The Marquis Acedo and Mario Sanchez.

JULIAN. *Friends* of Alvarez?

PEPITO. Wasn't time to find others.

BEAULIEU. I offered — but Ernesto said 'no,' I'd get in trouble with my government —

JULIAN. And *when* — to-morrow?

PEPITO. No, Alvarez asked for to-morrow, but Ernesto insisted *to-day*.

JULIAN. The hour?

PEPITO [*hesitating*]. Ernesto forbade —

JULIAN. Lest I take his place! — The time, Pepito.

BEAULIEU [*interposing*]. No, Pepito.

JULIAN. But, why?

BEAULIEU. You're playing Alvarez' game for him. — Don't you see? — This is the very thing he wanted — an open *esclandre!* — Just what he's been intriguing for. Up to now he's been fighting you with dirty tattle — gutter gossip — that everyone knew to be lies! But *now* — with a duel to dignify the talk — he has a *different* weapon. He has sworn you shall not have this appointment. He is a violent, desperate man — will go to any lengths to have his way — and you're playing right into his hands! He involves you in scandal so notorious and possibly so tragic — no government dare ignore it. A duel with a rat like that — by Jove! — it's sacrilege to honest steel!

SEVERO. It is the Spanish way — for all we love music!

BEAULIEU. Yes, but if you don't mind my saying so, your Spanish way is like your Spanish wine — out of fashion! Picturesque, your Spanish ways, but like your old castles, very uncomfortable. Now, in *my* country —

SEVERO. Cold blood — all of you!

BEAULIEU. Not all of us — don't you believe it! Scandal doesn't bother about the latitude. This sort of thing happens with us, too — but we manage differently and, I believe, better. See — *here*, a scamp does his best to injure you — smirches your good name — spreads ill and lying reports — and to avenge yourself — to punish *him* — you let him poke six inches of cold steel into your ribs. Pretty idea, if you like — but bad business!

SEVERO. But an affair of honor —

BEAULIEU. Oh, hang it, my dear fellow, honor is a thing within one's self — in one's own watch and ward. Heaven forbid it should be at the mercy of every flippant tongue and evil mind.

JULIAN [*in a tone that indicates he has already answered his own question*]. What shall one do with such a man as Alvarez?

BEAULIEU. Just what Ernesto did — and more of the same sort! Cane him, kick him, brand him — *kill* him! if you like — but don't let the devil kill you! And that's just what he'll do if you give him the chance.

JULIAN [*grimly*]. No, he will not.

BEAULIEU. My God, he will! He's the strongest arm, the quickest wrist, in Madrid, to-day.

JULIAN. But not to-morrow — I

promise you that. [*To* PEPITO]. When do they meet, Pepito?

PEPITO [*after a frightened glance at* SEVERO]. Why — why — four o'clock.

JULIAN [*to* SEVERO, *glancing hurriedly at his watch*]. We have just time — come!

BEAULIEU [*to* PEPITO]. You've blundered, my boy.

PEPITO [*to* SEVERO]. Have I, father — *blundered?*

JULIAN [*joyously*]. Blundered! [*With his hands on* PEPITO'S *shoulders*] You dear, delightful boy — you've done the best day's work of your life — [*Turning to* SEVERO] Severo — if anything happens to me — *whatever* happens — good or bad — half of everything I have is Pepito's — *all*, if he wants it — and my eternal gratitude besides!

SEVERO. For *what?* Planning this *holiday?*

JULIAN. It *is* a holiday!

BEAULIEU [*warningly*]. Please, please, Don Julian, don't underrate your opponent. When you face Alvarez —

JULIAN [*in a sort of nervous ecstasy*]. Anything, or anyone, just so it is someone! Great God, think of the relief — the relief! Until this moment, the calumny that was all about me, dogging my footsteps, invading my home, seated at my table, stalking by my bed, pursuing me, asleep, awake — every minute of the day and night — until this moment, I could not reach it or lay hands on it. It was nothing — no one! Because it was *everyone.* But *now,* this subtle, elusive, poisonous mist — this will-o'-the-wisp that stung me, escaped, and mocked me — now it has taken a body, shape and being, whom I can lay hands on and hold face to face! It is no longer a ghost — it's a *man* — Alvarez! Do you wonder I am overjoyed? — Come, Severo!

[*Goes out quickly with his arm in* SEVERO'S; *their voices are heard, mingled with laughter, as they pass down the hallway*]

BEAULIEU [*calling after* JULIAN]. God be with you — gallant gentleman. The other — [*pointing downward*] will be with Alvarez. [*After a pause, to* PEPITO] We've done it, my boy.

PEPITO. No — it's all right — Alvarez won't fight Julian — not until he's met Ernesto.

BEAULIEU. Are you sure?

PEPITO. Of *course* — it's the *code!*

BEAULIEU. Much he cares for the *code* — that blackguard!

PEPITO [*with an air of authority*]. Oh, well, Captain — Alvarez may be blackguard, as you say, but for all that, he's *gentleman.* Why, can't you see? Suppose he allowed Julian to kill or disable him — that wouldn't be fair to Ernesto. He has the prior right.

BEAULIEU [*holding up a glass of sherry*]. Here's he'll make the most of it!

PEPITO. And if *not* — Julian can take care of himself. This Alvarez, you know what he is? — what they say in London — a cat! A bouncer!

BEAULIEU. Cad, Pepito, cad — and bounder — not bouncer!

PEPITO. You know what I mean — he boasts and blusters.

BEAULIEU. Yes, you've a lot here like that — boast and bluster, but, hang it! when they get a sword in their hand, they're as good as their word — and better.

PEPITO. He'll have to be — when Ernesto knows that Julian follows him—

BEAULIEU. He *mustn't* know.

PEPITO. But he's sure to learn —

BEAULIEU. *After his own* affair — well and good! But not one word now — would only unnerve him — excite him —

PEPITO [*as if struck by an idea*]. Beaulieu — I don't care what people say — you're no fool!

BEAULIEU. Pretty idea! Thank you kindly — and if you'll accept it as *mere courtesy,* I'll return the compliment — provided you follow my counsel and say nothing to disturb Ernesto. — The poor fellow has more than his share, now — and for what? What has he done —?

PEPITO. Captain — I can speak with you frankly — you are our friend — and a man of the world — as I am. [BEAULIEU *adjusts his monocle quizzingly and turns to* PEPITO, *who does the same*] Yes, I have travelled — Ernesto, no — nor my people — except in summer, to San Sebastian, for the seabath — but I have seen life — the high-life — the great world. I passed one whole winter in Havana — in my uncle's bank — before the Yankees came — with their narrow ideas and open plumbing — and I tell you, Ernesto and Teodora —

BEAULIEU [*with uplifted hand, and turning away*]. If you please, I'd rather not.

PEPITO. No — it is nothing! Only they've not been — what you say in London — clever. — Why, with my own eyes, I've seen —

BEAULIEU [*stopping* PEPITO, *with a gesture*]. Well, no use telling me! — Because I never believe anything I don't see with my *own* two eyes — and then I only believe one-half of that, because — [*indicating his monocled eye*] this one eye's a *blinker!*

PEPITO. Well, — they should have been prudent. One owes *that* to one's friends. — Here, in Madrid, life is not varied — people are hard put for amusement — diversion. — Yes, the bull-fight, opera, theatre, dance — but the same story, the year round. But the *gossip*, that is always new.

BEAULIEU [*interrupting*]. There's been no ground for gossip; long as I've been in Madrid, I don't believe I've ever seen Donna Teodora and Ernesto alone, in public — yes, *once*, perhaps.

PEPITO. Precisely! But if a hundred persons saw them that once, it is just the same as if one person saw them a hundred times — or fifty persons twice — or twenty persons five times. And *they* run to tell their families — and *they*, in turn, tell the neighbors — and then *they* tell —

BEAULIEU [*hitting the table with his hand*]. They! They! [*Rising*] Do you know what 'they' stands for? It's the family-name of Ananias and Sapphira! — Yes — it was the name on their door-plate and visiting cards. In the parish registry of their time, it read: 'Ananias and Sapphira *They*.' And when the Lord struck them down, in the midst of their last gigantic whopper — and you may be sure it was about some decent man and woman — the newspapers reported the sudden taking off of Mr. and Mrs. They — known to their friends as Ananias and Sapphira!

PEPITO. But *that* isn't in the Bible!

BEAULIEU. No — because the name is of such evil and malignant portent, the Good Book wouldn't repeat it — 'They!' 'They'! By Jove, I never hear the word that I don't want to cross my fingers [*crosses his fingers*] and repeat the Litany with an added clause — 'Good Lord, deliver us from *They!*'

[ERNESTO *enters*]

ERNESTO [*to* PEPITO]. Hello, boy! — You needn't have waited, Beaulieu.

BEAULIEU. Thought we might be of some service.

ERNESTO. No, thanks. Everything's arranged. It'll be all over in an hour. [*Pulls the bell-cord*]

BEAULIEU [*noting* ERNESTO'S *calm manner*]. One good thing — you're cool about it.

ERNESTO. Why not? If I finish him, the world's better off — and the other way round, I'm better off.

BEAULIEU. In *that* mood, you'll be easy for him.

ERNESTO [*shaking his head, and with a grim smile*]. No!

BEAULIEU. Oh, I've seen him, at the fencing club, *watch* you as a snake watches a bird — and you never knew it!

ERNESTO. Good! Or I'd had to show him all I know.

BEAULIEU [*catching his meaning*]. Oh, I see! Pretty idea — and so Spanish!

ERNESTO [*in a low tone to* GENARO *who enters*]. Genaro — some gentlemen will call presently, to arrange for the use of your *studio*.

GENARO. Yes, sir — they've already been here.

ERNESTO. Oh! — See the door from that corridor is locked.

GENARO. Yes, sir. [*Goes out*]

BEAULIEU. Now, I suppose, you'd like to be alone.

ERNESTO [*looking at his watch*]. No hurry — some time until the seconds call for me. [GENARO *re-enters*]

ERNESTO [*to* GENARO]. I'll be going out presently, and shan't come back here again — they will come for my trunks — while I'm out — see they get to the station in good season for the night train to Cadiz.

GENARO. Yes, sir. — The night train to Cadiz. [*Goes out*]

PEPITO. But — Ernesto —

ERNESTO. Yes.

PEPITO. If — if something — should happen?

ERNESTO [*with his hands on* PEPITO'S *shoulders*]. Don't you worry, boy.

PEPITO [*shaking his head dubiously*]. H'm — h'm — he'll send you to the devil — if he can.

ERNESTO [*lightly*]. Well, at the worst, I won't need my trunks there — they might just as well go on —

BEAULIEU [*suddenly, as if roused from thought*]. Damn it! — Why the deuce did you have to go there!

ERNESTO. Because, as you heard, I'd arranged to meet Moreno.

BEAULIEU. Yes, but *just* at that moment! Another minute, Alvarez had been gone from the place — and this wouldn't have happened!

ERNESTO. Yes, but this was *meant* to happen, and that one single minute Fate held free that it *should* happen! Think of it, Beaulieu, in all the infinite space of time, there was only one minute — one tick of the watch — for that encounter between Alvarez and me, and chance gave it to me! Without that, I'd have had to bear, all the rest of my life, the torturing thought, the bitter impotent rage, that he had hurt and humiliated me, until my senses reeled, while I stood helpless and unresisting, with lips locked and my hands bound! Can't you see, in what happened there, the determined purpose of Chance or Fate or whatever it may be, to end his infamies and bring him to account? — Why, my dear Beaulieu, if there be any power that orders human affairs for right and wrong, do you suppose a man like Alvarez is to go on his way of calculated evil — ruthless, brazen and *exultant* — to the end! Do you *doubt* there is one *appointed* moment when he must answer for his offence! — What sort of world would this be — would it be worth the making or worth the caring-for — if such a creature could defile fair names, could distort the very faith and candor of men and women to their shame and confusion and yet escape all reckoning with God or man? — No, Beaulieu, as you're my friend, don't you *regret* that one *blessed* moment that led me to Señor Alvarez. Whatever Fate may have in store for me to-morrow, to-day I know I stood in her good graces — that she means only well by me.

BEAULIEU. I hope you're right, but I'm never so sure about the *good intentions* of that Fate lady — I've seen her play some rather queer tricks upon mighty good chaps. [*With a changed tone*] And when — when is it to be?

ERNESTO. Four o'clock.

BEAULIEU. Out of town, of course.

ERNESTO. No — wouldn't be time for that — the seconds agreed on a room.

PEPITO. Not the Alcazar — where the quarrel —?

ERNESTO. No, here.

BEAULIEU [*to* ERNESTO]. In this house?

ERNESTO [*crosses to door at the left*]. At the end of this corridor — [*to* PEPITO] where you got my fencing traps. [*Opens the door*] Large room, good light — and stairs leading from the court below. — We'll be quite comfortable there. It's been used for the same purpose before. — Beaulieu, you can do me a service, if you will.

BEAULIEU [*comes to him*]. Anything in the world, old chap.

ERNESTO. By this time, Don Julian must have heard of the affair at the Alcazar.

BEAULIEU. Oh, surely.

ERNESTO. Go and find him, if you can — [*looks at his watch*] at the Foreign Office or his house — assure him I didn't start the quarrel — and, above all — he likes you, you know — keep him in hand until this is over — don't let him out of your sight. — If nothing else, just talk to him.

BEAULIEU. If need be, I'll be *brilliant* — anything to keep matters straight. — Now tell me again — and you can't tell me too often — you're *sure* of yourself?

ERNESTO. I can only be sure I'll do my best.

BEAULIEU. Hang it, no! — the *best* isn't good enough — it's the *worst* that's needed for that scamp. Finish him, my boy — *finish* him — or else come so near it he won't know the difference for a month or two. [*Holding out his hands*] Now, good luck and God bless you!

ERNESTO [*rather sombrely*]. Good-by.

BEAULIEU. Ugly word — I never say it. Au'voir — au'voir! And you, Pepito — Au'voir!

[*Puts his fingers to his lips to indicate silence, and goes out*]

[GENARO *is heard, singing: he appears at the door as* BEAULIEU *goes out, and makes way for him*]

GENARO [*entering, to* ERNESTO]. Somebody to see you, sir.

ERNESTO. But I've no time, now.

GENARO. I said that, sir, but the lady insisted.

PEPITO. Trala! A lady?

GENARO. I shouldn't wonder, sir — she has no veil on.

ERNESTO. The lady's alone?

GENARO. Yes, sir — *I* should say alone — she has only her maid with her.

ERNESTO. I'll go below to see her. [*Starts to go*].

GENARO. I beg pardon, sir — it's

the music hour — there are many in the café — and the lady has been crying.

[ERNESTO *is obviously disturbed*]

PEPITO. No veil and crying — sounds promising. — Well, I'll be off. [*To* GENARO] What are you waiting for?

GENARO. Orders to show the lady in.

PEPITO. Why, don't you know your business better than that? You must always show a lady in, especially when she's crying — and, once she's in — no one else!

GENARO [*to* ERNESTO]. Your orders, sir?

ERNESTO. Didn't you ask the lady's name?

GENARO [*with a knowing grin*]. Not a custom of the house, sir — but, [*suggestively*] perhaps, the lady of the letter.

ERNESTO. What letter?

GENARO [*crossing to the table*]. I put it there. [*Takes the letter*] Yes, here it is. [*Gives* ERNESTO *the letter*] Came just after you'd gone — she says she must see you.

ERNESTO [*glances nervously at letter and then at* PEPITO]. Yes, yes, of course, — show the lady in. [GENARO *goes out*]

PEPITO. Trala, aren't you clever! You're doing just right, Ernesto.

ERNESTO. You think —

PEPITO. The very thing! — making a diversion, as diplomats say. Beautiful! The quarrel with Alvarez over this *new* one. Good-by and good luck! And whatever happens, Ernesto, I won't be far off. [*Goes out quickly*].

ERNESTO [*opening the letter*]. Teodora! [*Reads*] 'I implore you do not quarrel with Julian! No matter what he may say or do — be patient with him! I entreat you — by our love for him — yours and mine — be patient with him. Remember, dear friend, my soul adores him — and he is so unhappy — and *I*.'

TEODORA [*appearing at the door*]. I am not too late?

ERNESTO. Teodora! — You shouldn't have done this, Teo!

TEODORA. Never mind about me — now, it is you and Julian. — Where is he? I must speak with him — and you.

ERNESTO. But to come here — and *alone!*

TEODORA. There was no other way — and I *had* to see you.

ERNESTO. But surely, Mercedes would have —

TEODORA. No, she refused. — Severo forbids her to be seen with me in public, anywhere.

ERNESTO [*fiercely*]. Severo!

TEODORA. That's what they've brought it to, Ernesto. [*Pointing to the letter in* ERNESTO's *hand*] I waited for an answer —

ERNESTO [*indicating the letter*]. I just now have it.

TEODORA [*continues feverishly*]. I wanted your word — to assure me — but I could endure it no longer.

ERNESTO. But, Teodora, to come here! If you were seen —

TEODORA [*defiantly*]. What of it? What could they say that they have not already said? I no longer care — nothing matters — only that you shall not fight.

ERNESTO [*protesting*]. But, Teo, when you hear what happened!

TEODORA [*insisting commandingly*]. No, no, no — no matter — what happened — you shall not fight on *my account!*

ERNESTO. If you knew — the insult!

TEODORA [*pointing to the letter still in* ERNESTO's *hand*]. But I warned you — implored you — [*with pathos*] to bear with him.

ERNESTO [*bewildered*]. Julian —?

TEODORA. When Mercedes told me he'd come here — with Severo — who hates us — you and me — I knew what it meant. But you shall not fight for me. Oh, the shame of it! — *you and Julian!* — to seek each other's life — for *me!*

ERNESTO. But, Teo, we have no quarrel, Julian and I.

TEODORA. You promise me — your word of honor?

ERNESTO. Of course.

TEODORA. And you forgive — the insult?

ERNESTO. There's been none.

TEODORA. But you said just now —

ERNESTO. Alvarez — yes.

TEODORA. Alvarez! Despite Beaulieu's warning, you sought a quarrel with him?

ERNESTO. No — he forced the quarrel on me — wildly — in a frenzy — like a man drunk with hate. He knew I was leaving to-day — the thought that I might escape him, and that, once I had gone, there'd be no further excuse for his lies — maddened him!

TEODORA. Still, I forbid it — you shall not fight — for me!

ERNESTO. For a woman, then — any woman — held up to scorn — her name tossed from glass to glass — in a group of jeering ribalds — until every nook and corner echoed the insult — clear and insistent above the turmoil of a tippler's brawl.

TEODORA [*overwhelmed*]. Great God! Ernesto, was it like that?

ERNESTO [*with clenched fists and in tones of mingled horror and vengeance*]. Oh, Teodora, I only want the picture before me, when I face him!

TEODORA [*recovering herself*]. But the world will know it is for me — they'll ask why *you* defend my good name, and not Julian! — And you should have thought of that, Ernesto, you should have avoided the quarrel —

ERNESTO [*interrupting*]. I tried.

TEODORA [*continuing*]. At any cost of pride — by any trick —

ERNESTO. How I sought to avoid it — Beaulieu will tell you — till they threw it into my face — the insult.

TEODORA. But it was meant for Julian — and me. You have no right — to take his quarrel on yourself. — [*As if to clinch the matter*] It would be — impertinence!

ERNESTO [*horrified*]. Teodora!

TEODORA [*proudly and almost coldly*]. It is Julian's privilege — and his alone. It is for my husband — and none but him — to guard my good name.

ERNESTO. But, Teodora, a life must be staked against this man's — when swords cross, the issue is always uncertain. Alvarez' skill is proved and notorious — you know that?

TEODORA [*weakly*]. Yes.

ERNESTO. Well, then, if it must be Julian or me —

TEODORA [*falteringly*]. Julian, or — you?

ERNESTO. Between his life and mine you will not hesitate?

[*They look at each other intently, and in silence*]

TEODORA [*as if she has forced herself to a decision*]. Julian himself shall decide.

ERNESTO. But, Teo, think a moment — it was *I* who struck Alvarez — full in the face — before his friends and a hundred others. — He is *entitled* to a chance at my life. If I refuse to meet him he will kill me — and rightly so!

TEODORA [*in a panic of apprehension*]. No, no, he shall not. No! — Let Julian decide, please, — send for him — or, come — let us go to him. [*Starts toward the door, stops suddenly, listens*] Why — I thought I heard Julian's voice. [*A door is heard to close*]

ERNESTO. No one for me.

TEODORA. Shall we not go?

ERNESTO [*glancing at the clock*]. There is no time now.

TEODORA [*not understanding*]. Why? No time? You mean — you fight Alvarez to-day?

ERNESTO. At four o'clock.

TEODORA [*as if beside herself*]. No! I forbid you — for the last time — I for — [*Voices are heard*] Who is that? There is someone for you, surely.

ERNESTO. It is almost time for them. [*Goes to the door and looks out*]

TEODORA [*in tones of fright*]. Your seconds? — Captain Beaulieu and —

ERNESTO [*interrupting, and shaking his head*]. The Marquis Acedo and Mario Sanches.

TEODORA. *They!* Alvarez' friends!

ERNESTO. The first to hand —

TEODORA [*panic-stricken*]. If *they* saw me here!

ERNESTO [*as if to calm her*]. No, no — it may not be they. [*The voices are heard again*] And — even if they saw you —

TEODORA [*brokenly*]. Ernesto, my courage is gone — quite gone. — I tremble like a leaf!

[*There is a noise of knocking; then the voices again*]

ERNESTO. [*Listening*]. That can't be they! [*Goes to the door of the corridor*] It is here!

TEODORA. Julian's voice — it *is!* — And Severo's!

[*The noise is repeated, with the sound of a knob being turned*]

[TEODORA *and* ERNESTO *stand silent, bewildered*]

[*A voice is heard beyond the closed door, crying: 'Open — unbolt the door!'*]

PEPITO [*from outside*]. Open, Ernesto! Ernesto!

TEODORA. Pepito! It's Pepito! [*Looks about, as if to rush off*]

ERNESTO [*stopping her, and opening the door leading to the corridor*]. No, no, no — remain where you are! It's only Pepito. — Stay, Teo!

[*Disappears into the corridor. As he opens the door at the other end of the corridor, voices are heard in a confused babble*]

[TEODORA, *frightened, distracted, rushes toward the door at the right. As she opens it, there is heard the music from the café, the buzz of voices, and laughter; and then* BEAULIEU'S *voice in controversy with* GENARO]

BEAULIEU [*speaking outside*]. Never mind, I know the way —

GENARO [*protestingly*]. But there's someone with him —

BEAULIEU [*coming nearer*]. Nonsense, I only just left him —

TEODORA [*beside herself*]. Captain Beaulieu!

[*Pauses for an instant, as if at bay. Then, as the voices in the corridor draw nearer, and the buzz from the café increases, in a flash of panic she rushes into the bedroom*]

[ERNESTO *re-enters from the corridor, followed by* PEPITO]

PEPITO. You're alone?

ERNESTO [*glancing about*]. Yes, yes. [*To himself*] Thank God!

BEAULIEU [*entering, excitedly*]. Julian came here, with your seconds! [*In a tone of horror*] What's the matter with you fellows? — What's happened?

ERNESTO [*fiercely*]. This boy betrayed me — told them everything!

BEAULIEU. But didn't mean to — they made him.

PEPITO. Julian flew to Alvarez' house — dragged him here with your seconds — forced him to fight — and they fought like fiends!

BEAULIEU. And Julian — hurt?

PEPITO. Mortally, I believe. [*Steps are heard in the corridor*]. They're bringing him here.

JULIAN [*entering from the corridor, and warding off* SEVERO, *who moves as if to support him*]. No, no — let me be. — Close that door. — That rat sha'n't see how he scratched me! [SEVERO *goes into the corridor*]

ERNESTO [*with an appealing gesture*]. Julian, that was *my* work! — You had no right to take it from me.

JULIAN. Never mind, my boy. — It is still for you to do — and better than I —

[*Winces and supports himself against the cabinet near the door*]

SEVERO [*re-entering*]. Come, Julian, you must lie down —

ERNESTO. Yes, in here.

[*Goes to the bedroom door, opens it, and sees to his astonishment that* TEODORA *is there. He closes the door abruptly, and stands with his back to it, obviously panic-stricken, and as if to bar entrance*]

JULIAN [*takes a step toward the door; stops; and gasps, as if in great pain*]. One minute, please — I can't — Ernesto —

[ERNESTO *returns as if to help him. They move toward the bedroom, until they reach a large chair near the door*]

JULIAN [*clutching the chair*]. Ernesto — here — for a moment. [*Faintly*] Yes — that's better — [*Pauses*] Now — Ernesto — [*Growing weaker*] Send — for — for — Teo.

ERNESTO [*aghast*]. Teo! [*As if to re-assure him*] Julian, you're not —

JULIAN [*with his hand to his heart, gaspingly*] I'm afraid — yes — *you* go — bring her — to me. — Don't — tell — her — I'm — [*To* SEVERO] Let me lie down.

[*Takes a step toward the bedroom, but utters a piercing cry of pain, and collapses into the chair*]

TEODORA [*rushing from the room, impelled by* JULIAN'S *cry*]. Julian!

[JULIAN *pulls himself together at the sound of her voice, and stares at her as if dazed*]

TEODORA [*on her knees before him*]. Julian, don't you see me? — Teo, your wife!

JULIAN [*staring, as if into space, and bewildered*]. My wife — here — already — no!

SEVERO. Yes, brother, your wife! [*Pointing to* ERNESTO] And your friend!

JULIAN [*looking about, as if to make sure where he is*]. Here! [*Pause*] Why — are you — here?

TEODORA. To save you from this — I meant —

ERNESTO [*eagerly*]. Yes! — she feared *we* would fight — you and I! —

SEVERO [*interrupting savagely*]. Then why hide? — [*pointing to the bedroom*] *hide* — like guilty things?

TEODORA [*in agonized protest*]. No, no, no, Julian!

JULIAN [*pushing her aside*]. You were right, Severo — a rendezvous!

ERNESTO [*frantically, as he offers* TEODORA'S *letter*]. Here, Julian, you will *see* the *truth!*

SEVERO [*to* ERNESTO *and* TEODORA]. Oh, he sees — yes, *now* he sees!

JULIAN [*half rises from the chair, with hands to eyes, as if rubbing away a mist*]. No, no — phantoms! Only phantoms! [*Collapses into the chair*]

SEVERO [*wildly*]. No, *not* phantoms! Traitors — flesh-and-blood traitors! [*Advancing rapidly to* ERNESTO] For this day's work I'll — [*Moves as if to strike* ERNESTO]

ERNESTO [*seizing* SEVERO'S *uplifted hand, and holding it down*]. Yes, yes — of course — later, if you like — you may kill me, and with my last breath I'll bless you for it — but, first, in God's name — let me meet Alvarez!

[*Goes quickly into the corridor, followed by* BEAULIEU]

ACT III

The scene is again the drawing-room in DON JULIAN'S *house, a few hours after the event of the previous act. Only the torchère, by the piano, and the hall-lantern are lighted. The curtains in the archway leading to the balcony are drawn together.*

[*As the curtain rises,* PEPITO *enters, slowly, from* JULIAN'S *room*]

SERVANT [*entering silently, announces in almost a whisper*]. Captain Beaulieu.

PEPITO [*nodding*]. Yes.

[SERVANT *opens the door leading to the hall.* BEAULIEU *enters*]

BEAULIEU. How's the good man?

PEPITO [*dubiously*]. Hard to tell.

BEAULIEU. Not the worst!

PEPITO. Julian says it's a mere scratch.

BEAULIEU. What does the surgeon say. — Any chance?

PEPITO. Yes, if he can be kept quiet. Will come through all right, the surgeon says. But he won't even lie on the couch; starts up every few minutes, as if from a nightmare; stalks about the room, pretending he isn't really hurt. And keeps asking for Teo!

BEAULIEU [*surprised*]. Why, isn't Donna Teodora with him?

PEPITO [*meaningly*]. What! after — her visit — to Ernesto?

BEAULIEU [*warningly*]. By Jove, if you people aren't careful, you'll do for Julian what Alvarez didn't.

PEPITO. Well, whatever happens, my father will square the score with *him.* [*Makes a gesture*] He'll run him through!

BEAULIEU. Pretty idea! — But the account's already squared — and wiped off the slate!

PEPITO [*eagerly*]. Ernesto?

BEAULIEU. Beautiful piece of work! — May cost me my *congé,* but I wouldn't have missed it for an Embassy.

PEPITO. But not the — *finish?*

BEAULIEU. If Alvarez gets over it, it's because the devil doesn't want his company. At any rate, he'll never fight again. That wonderful arm of his is out of business.

[MERCEDES *enters from the door at the right*]

PEPITO [*greeting her joyously*]. Mother, dear, isn't it splendid! — Alvarez can't harm Papa! He's done for!

MERCEDES [*looking at* BEAULIEU *for explanation*]. Don Ernesto?

BEAULIEU [*nods 'yes'*]. They fought at four — precisely as they'd arranged.

PEPITO [*at the balcony windows, drawing back the curtains, so as to disclose Alvarez' house, showing dark in the brightly lit avenue*]. See, mother, not a light over there, at Alvarez' — dark as a house of mourning. [*Gleefully*] I'll go tell father.

MERCEDES [*stopping him as he reaches the door*]. And say I wish to see him — now.

[PEPITO *goes out*]

BEAULIEU [*to* MERCEDES]. And the Donna Teodora?

MERCEDES. We're not to speak her name — my husband *forbids* — to strangers.

BEAULIEU. But I count myself an old friend — and I bring a message.

MERCEDES [*eagerly*]. Then he's gone?

BEAULIEU. No. — And he won't go — until he's seen Donna Teodora and Julian.

MERCEDES. Has the man lost his wits?

BEAULIEU. The very question I asked *him.*

MERCEDES. If he shows himself here — I don't know what might happen.

BEAULIEU. I *do!* So I'm going to keep close to him, until he's safely off on his journey. — The poor fellow is all alone. — His life since he's been in Madrid was lived in this house. There's no one out there he can turn to. And he's beside himself — more than half mad — desperate enough for anything. — Don't drive him one step further — receive him when he calls —

MERCEDES. But if it were known — that he'd come here?

BEAULIEU. Excellent diplomacy! — the best possible way to end this — this — [*hesitates*] tragedy of gossip! And, after all, why shouldn't it be known — why shouldn't he come here?

MERCEDES [*wonderingly*]. Why?

BEAULIEU. Yes.

MERCEDES. And you don't believe — he and Teodora — ?

BEAULIEU [*interrupting*]. No more than you and I — [MERCEDES *indicates her amazement at the awkward comparison*]

BEAULIEU [*quickly correcting himself*]. I beg your pardon, dear lady, but I want to put it convincingly. [SEVERO *is heard talking to* PEPITO] Now, if you can persuade — Don Severo — [*Points to the door to indicate* SEVERO; *then turns as if to go out*]

MERCEDES [*stopping him*]. Wait — judge for yourself.

SEVERO [*at the door*]. What is it?

MERCEDES. Severo — Teodora begs to see Julian —

SEVERO [*advancing to* MERCEDES *and speaking sharply*]. You've disobeyed my orders!

MERCEDES. No — I've not spoken with her — I *listened* to her pleadings.

SEVERO [*turning as if to go*]. *I'll* not listen — I want none of them —

MERCEDES. She asks only to say good-by to Julian; — then she will go.

SEVERO. She'll go *without* that — and *now* — I told you what to do —

MERCEDES. I cannot send that poor, distracted creature from this house at such a moment. — Where could she go, that she wouldn't be pointed out — after the scandal of to-day? — Where could she find welcome, or even shelter?

SEVERO [*deliberately*]. At her lover's — where we surprised her —

BEAULIEU [*angrily*]. Don Severo! — [*Apologetically*] I beg your pardon for intervening — in this purely family matter — but circumstances have made me a part of it, as it were — and I've always been proud of Don Julian's friendship — and his wife's. — Now, I know nothing of Donna Teodora's — [*hesitating*] *errand* — to-day; but if you would take the trouble to learn the *truth*, you'd regret what you just said — I'd stake my life on it!

MERCEDES [*timidly*]. We *may* be doing her wrong —

SEVERO [*as if amazed*]. What!

MERCEDES. It is *possible* — just possible —

SEVERO [*interrupting*]. Now you defend her! That's the woman of you!

MERCEDES. No, I *don't* defend her — I believe as you do — her sin is too mean — her guilt too clear — but it's not for *me* to *punish* her. [SEVERO *turns away impatiently*] That is God's business.

SEVERO [*fiercely*]. It *was* Julian's — now it is *mine*.

BEAULIEU [*with a shrug*]. Of course, if you think you can do it better!

SEVERO. No one shall intercede here! — My brother casts this woman from his heart —

MERCEDES. That's as it should be! And you, his kinsman, cast her from the house she has dishonored — *that's* as it should be. But when that is done, she is no longer the sinning wife, but only a woman, helpless, sorrowing and alone. — And I must give her what I can of comfort and pity.

BEAULIEU [*to himself*]. *That's* the woman of it, too!

PEPITO [*with outstretched hands, appealingly*]. Yes, father, if you could but see Teodora, you would pity —

SEVERO [*bitterly*]. Pity! Pity! I have none — only for him — [*With a sudden change, to a tone quivering with tears*] Oh, Pepito, my brother — my poor, dear brother. [*Buries his head on* PEPITO'S *shoulder*]

MERCEDES [*tenderly*]. Severo — does not Teo — also love Julian?

SEVERO [*turns and faces her; speaks savagely*]. No! No! [*Goes to the door at left; pauses, pointing to* JULIAN'S *room*] Let her not cross that threshold!

[*Goes out*]

BEAULIEU [*looking after* SEVERO]. Donna Mercedes, your husband is —

MERCEDES [*proudly, and in a chilling tone*]. Yes, Captain Beaulieu?

BEAULIEU [*with a shrug*]. A Spaniard, I suppose.

[SERVANT *enters*]

SERVANT [*announcing*]. Don Ernesto.

MERCEDES. We receive no one.

[SERVANT *hesitates, as if waiting for further orders*]

BEAULIEU [*to* MERCEDES]. I beg of you —

MERCEDES [*with a gesture indicating* SEVERO]. You heard — [*To* SERVANT] Do not admit him. [SERVANT *starts to go out*]

BEAULIEU. That won't stop him. — He's in the mood when nothing can.

PEPITO. I'll go talk to him — [MERCEDES *stops him with a gesture*]

SERVANT. Don Ernesto insists, Madame.

MERCEDES. He shall not enter this house!

SERVANT. He has already done so, Madame.

PEPITO [*advancing*]. Then you should have —

SERVANT [*bowing*]. I thought it unwise, sir.

PEPITO [*with a threatening movement*]. Then *I* shall —

SERVANT. Beg pardon, sir, I still think it unwise, sir.

MERCEDES [*with growing anger*]. Tell him to leave, and if he will not — [ERNESTO *appears at the door and brushes by* SERVANT].

PEPITO [*finishing the sentence*]. Show him in.

SERVANT [*announcing*]. Don Ernesto.

BEAULIEU [*tapping* PEPITO *on the shoulder approvingly*]. Pretty idea!

[ERNESTO *comes into the room; he has his hat in his hand, and over his arm carries a long travelling-cape*]

MERCEDES [*to* ERNESTO]. The servants were ordered —

ERNESTO [*excitedly*]. Don't blame them — they were as rude as — anyone could wish. — Now that I'm in — you'll please have them announce me to Teodora.

MERCEDES. That is impossible, Ernesto!

ERNESTO. Why?

MERCEDES. If, just now, you'd heard Severo —

PEPITO [*nodding*]. Yes.

ERNESTO. Severo is nothing to me — I don't know there is such a man. — And well for him, perhaps! — In my world — to-night — there are only three beings — Julian, Teodora and I. — And nothing shall come between them and me — not Fate itself!

PEPITO [*appeasingly*]. But, see, Ernesto — the state you're in — you'd consider nothing — not your life nor anyone's else's.

ERNESTO. Because, Pepito — I've lost everything that makes life *worth* considering — and for no fault of my own. — Honor, friendship, love — all taken from me — and for nothing, '*really nothing*,' as he says —

MERCEDES. Careful, Ernesto — if Severo should hear!

ERNESTO. Oh, he *will* hear — enough! — Beaulieu knows! The door barred to me won't shut out those thousand tongues —

MERCEDES. They know — already?

BEAULIEU. They *think* they know — everything — everywhere.

ERNESTO. And everywhere it's different! And nowhere the truth! Teodora jealous of another woman, they say — made Julian challenge me. They had *that* story from the inn-keeper! — Julian surprised his wife in my room — some declare — and I killed him before her eyes. — Others, again, raise me from the rank of mere assassin and say we fought like loyal gentlemen — Julian and I! — A few have the tale — *accurately* — oh, yes! from Alvarez' seconds — I arrived on the scene late — not through accident or fear — but because I preferred to remain in Teodora's arms —

MERCEDES [*turning toward* BEAULIEU *as if for corroboration*]. Oh, no!

[BEAULIEU *nods 'yes'*]

ERNESTO. Yes, to such figures they can transform an innocent woman and two men who worship her, with love, with reverence, once they begin spattering their mud of slander. — And from such tales I am to flee, like a thief in the night, not daring even to look behind. — [*In a tone of decisive command*] Bring Teodora here — or take me to her!

PEPITO [*starting for the door*]. Yes, mother.

MERCEDES [*stopping* PEPITO]. Wait. — Ernesto, will that content you?

ERNESTO. Yes — [*then, as if suspecting what is in her mind*] but — I —

MERCEDES. You will go, in peace?

ERNESTO. And not see — Julian?

MERCEDES. No — not Julian.

ERNESTO. Why — I —

BEAULIEU [*persuasively*]. If Donna Teodora so wishes?

ERNESTO [*decisively*]. Yes — if Teodora so wishes. [*Appealing, to* PEPITO] Now, then, Pepito. [PEPITO *looks to* MERCEDES *for consent*]

MERCEDES [*nodding*]. Say, only, I wish to see her. [PEPITO *goes out*] [*To* ERNESTO] You will let me speak with her first?

ERNESTO. Yes.

MERCEDES. Alone?

ERNESTO. Yes.

MERCEDES. And you will do as she decides is best?

ERNESTO [*nervously*]. Yes — yes —

MERCEDES. Your promise — before Captain Beaulieu —

ERNESTO [*wildly*]. Yes, yes, yes! — anything — anything — just so I see her!

MERCEDES [*pointing to the balcony*]. Wait out there until I call you.

[ERNESTO *goes out to the balcony with* BEAULIEU]

PEPITO [*re-entering*]. She is here.

MERCEDES [*with a nod toward* ERNESTO]. You didn't tell her — ?

PEPITO. No — only that you wished to see her.

[BEAULIEU *re-enters*].

BEAULIEU [*taking* PEPITO'S *arm*]. Come, Pepito, we'll reason with him.

[*Goes out with* PEPITO]

TEODORA [*entering quickly*]. Julian — he is worse?

MERCEDES. No — a little better — possibly.

TEODORA. You're telling me the truth? [MERCEDES *nods*] Then I may go to him? [MERCEDES *does not answer*] Mercedes — you asked Severo? —

MERCEDES [*nodding 'yes'*]. Yes, but he — refuses.

TEODORA [*with fire*]. He *dare* not refuse — he must not —

MERCEDES. Teodora, Julian's life hangs by a thread. — He believes that you and Ernesto —

TEODORA [*interrupting*]. No, no, — it is *Severo* who believes — and who stands between Julian and me — so the truth may not reach him.

MERCEDES [*sceptically*]. The truth! — Why did you go there to-day?

TEODORA. You told me Julian had gone — that they might fight — and an awful dread — lest harm come to him —

MERCEDES [*cynically*]. Julian?

TEODORA. Of course, Julian.

MERCEDES [*sharply*]. And the other — there was no thought of *him?*

TEODORA [*as if trying to fathom her own thoughts*]. Why — I don't know —

MERCEDES [*angrily*]. Oh, yes, you do — you know!

TEODORA [*as if suddenly awakened to the truth*]. Yes! You are right — I feared for him, too — because —

MERCEDES [*incredulously*]. Oh, yes—

TEODORA. No! — Only because the thought that those two men — my husband and — the other — would fight over me — appalled me — *sickened* me — soul and body. — I am not of those women for whom men may slay each other — like raging beasts; — why, even with Alvarez — that monster! — I forbade Ernesto to fight — but now — *now* — he — shall — kill — him!

MERCEDES. It is already done, Teodora.

TEODORA [*with a smile*]. You are certain? [MERCEDES *nods 'yes'*] [*Exultantly*] I knew he would! I *knew* he would!

MERCEDES. You say that as if — as if —

TEODORA. What! You *still* mistrust me?

MERCEDES. But see how proud —

TEODORA. Of his courage, yes — his skill — his life, staked for Julian! —

MERCEDES. And *you!* He fought for *you.*

TEODORA. No, not for *me* — for a woman — struck in the face, in his presence, by words more cowardly than the clenched fist. What man would not do the same? — [*With a glow of admiration*] What man like Ernesto? [*Turns from* MERCEDES]

MERCEDES [*following her*]. See how you betray yourself —

TEODORA. Betray!

MERCEDES. Yes! Every tone you utter — the flush of your cheek — your lips tremble — your eyes soften with tears if you but speak his name. — Teodora, you love him!

TEODORA. No, no, no, a thousand times no! —

MERCEDES [*looking at her closely*]. Guard yourself well, I warn you — your steps falter.

TEODORA. And you wait to see me fall! [MERCEDES *makes a sign of protest*] You urge and push me to the very trap you pretend to warn me of; else why do you din into my ears this lie — this lie — 'You love him' — 'you love him.' — Little by little, oh, so cunningly, so fiendishly, you try to convince me that love for Julian is going from my heart, and that love for another — try as I will to fight it — is taking its place. — It is from *you* I must guard myself — and not from him for whom I have never known one single, passing thought but honest friendship.

MERCEDES. Is that the truth?

TEODORA. I have never lied! It is the truth *now.* But God knows what you all may do with your ceaseless suspicion — warning us of danger we never

dreamed of — weaving about us a mist of doubt and self-distrust through which we no longer see our own souls clearly. [*Fiercely*] Keep on with this lie, Mercedes, and in the end you may distort the lie into truth!

MERCEDES [*triumphantly, turning from her*]. You see, you're not certain of yourself!

TEODORA. Indeed I am —

MERCEDES [*coming back to her*]. Of him, too?

TEODORA. Yes.

MERCEDES. You wouldn't say so, if you'd seen him just now — and heard him.

TEODORA. Where?

MERCEDES. Here. — Every word and look declared the truth. — He loves you!

TEODORA [*protesting wildly*]. No, no, no!

MERCEDES. If you'd heard him — you wouldn't doubt —

TEODORA. Then well for him I didn't! — He's gone?

MERCEDES. He's waiting for you — out there.

TEODORA [*takes a step toward the balcony, then turns*]. No! Tell him to leave here. He's done harm enough in this house. Tell him to be off — I want never to see him again.

MERCEDES [*deliberately*]. If you don't love him, you'll tell him that with your own lips.

TEODORA. That I will — and you shall see how I tell him. [MERCEDES *goes to the balcony-door and beckons* ERNESTO *to enter*]

MERCEDES [*to* ERNESTO]. You forced your way into this house against my orders — you insisted on seeing Donna Teodora against my advice. — I trust her to make you regret it.

[*There is an awkward pause,* ERNESTO *obviously waiting for* MERCEDES *to leave*]

ERNESTO. Better, then, between Teodora and me.

MERCEDES [*making no sign of going*]. For what Teodora has to say to you —

ERNESTO [*interrupting*]. But for what I have to say to Teodora — [*With a bow as if dismissing* MERCEDES] If you please —

MERCEDES [*appealing to* TEODORA]. Teodora?

ERNESTO. Alone, Teodora — you and I.

TEODORA [*after a slight hesitation*]. Let it be as he wishes.

MERCEDES [*accusingly*]. You are as wax in his hands.

TEODORA. You shall see!

[MERCEDES *goes out*]

TEODORA. Don Ernesto, I wish you to leave this house, at once!

ERNESTO [*as if bewildered*]. So that was her plan! — *You* to show me the door! But not your own free will, Teodora?

TEODORA. Absolutely — I wish you to go — we must never see each other — again.

ERNESTO. Yes, yes, of course — that must be, I know — [*appealingly*] but, Teodora, not this way — not this way!

TEODORA [*in a softer tone*]. Surely, you must understand. . . .

ERNESTO. That my very presence is hateful to you, yes — and that I must seem the evil genius of your house — but don't drive me out — till I've seen Julian — spoken with him.

TEODORA [*excitedly*]. Julian! No — that cannot be.

ERNESTO. For just one word of forgiveness — a hand-clasp of farewell.

TEODORA. No, no, no — you may not go to Julian.

ERNESTO. Teodora — [*Pointing to* JULIAN'S *door*] To leave him, forever — this way — I'm not a coward — and I've learned to suffer, but I can't face that — I *can't!*

[*Starts toward* JULIAN'S *door*]

TEODORA [*stopping him*]. I forbid you!

ERNESTO. You forbid! They knew, they knew I'd obey — made me promise. — Then, you, Teodora — you will go — and bring me word — only one word, of Julian's faith.

TEODORA [*stands with lowered head as if ashamed to answer*]. No — no — I —

ERNESTO. You refuse? — Teodora, even though you hate me — have pity — pity!

TEODORA. Yes, and you, too, for me. If you may not cross that threshold, no more may *I* —

ERNESTO [*amazed*]. Teo!

TEODORA. They bar me from him, as though my touch were poison.

ERNESTO. Who does this — who — Severo?

TEODORA. Yes, Severo.

ERNESTO [*tensely*]. We shall see — we shall see! [*Takes her hand*] Come.

TEODORA [*drawing her hand away quickly*]. What would you do? —

ERNESTO. To Julian — you and I —

TEODORA [*feverishly*]. No, no, no — it would kill him — they say.

ERNESTO [*insisting*]. No — but their lies, that torture and poison him, may! We'll give him new strength and courage, with the truth.

TEODORA [*drawing away from him, shaking her head sadly*]. He will not believe — he would not listen.

ERNESTO [*with increasing fervor*]. He must believe! Though no word be spoken — he'll *see* the truth. Come, Teodora, everything else, I yield — I'll obey — but let me not go from here till — [*On half bended knee*] I implore you — I entreat you — [*At full height, and with changed tone*] I *command* you —

[*As* ERNESTO *utters this impassioned plea to* TEODORA, SEVERO *appears at the door which leads to* JULIAN'S *room*]

SEVERO. You wretched — [*Advances threateningly to* ERNESTO]. Who dared let you enter?

ERNESTO. No one — I forced my way in. Don Severo, I wish —

SEVERO [*interrupting*]. To complete your perfidy! — You see what has come from —

ERNESTO. 'From nothing — really nothing!' That I will prove to Julian, if I must fight at every step to reach him. For see him, I shall.

[ERNESTO *makes two or three steps towards* JULIAN'S *door;* SEVERO *posts himself before the door as if to bar the way*]

SEVERO. Be off! I counsel you — go!

ERNESTO [*decisively*]. Not till I've seen Julian — *spoken* with him —

SEVERO. Why? With what purpose? To finish the work Alvarez began for you? The grim spectre stalks too slowly, eh? [ERNESTO *makes a gesture of protest*] Your every heart-throb bids him hurry! hurry! hurry! — So eager are you two for each other's arms.

ERNESTO [*after a pause*]. I'll not answer you in kind — here — now. Your grief — your great love for Julian, excuses much. — Deal with me as you will — but this unhappy woman you must show, at least, pity.

SEVERO [*going to the bell at left*]. Her and you, I show only — [*with a gesture of dismissal*] the door! Go — or I'll — [*Rings*]

ERNESTO. When I've seen Julian.

SERVANT [*entering, to* SEVERO]. Orders, sir?

TEODORA [*quietly*]. No — a mistake — Don Severo has no orders to give. — [SERVANT *goes out*] Here — [*to* SEVERO] so long as Julian lives, I am mistress of this house. [*To* ERNESTO] Remain.

SEVERO. You set your authority against mine — in this house you've dragged down to disgrace! — You forget you remain under this roof — by my sufferance — and Mercedes' plea for you. — You are mistress here, indeed! — Well, not only does *he* go, but he takes you with him, you — [*Utters a word that only* TEODORA *hears*]

TEODORA [*recoiling, as from a blow, and in tones of mingled horror and anguish*]. Oh, Julian! — [*Buries her face in her hands*]

SEVERO. Now, will you go?

ERNESTO. When, on bended knee, you ask her pardon. [*Seizes* SEVERO *as if to bring him to his knees*] That word should be your last. — On your knees —

TEODORA [*coming between them and interceding*]. No, no, no, no — Julian will hear — please — [ERNESTO *throws* SEVERO *to one side, as he releases him*] [TEODORA *leads* ERNESTO *away from* SEVERO, *pleading with him*] I beg of you — Ernesto — go — please go —

ERNESTO [*decisively*]. No — not until I've seen Julian —

JULIAN [*speaking in his room*]. Let me go — I hear them — I tell you —

MERCEDES [*is heard speaking to* JULIAN, *in his room*]. No — you must not —

[JULIAN *enters, followed by* MERCEDES. *He is deadly pale; his eyes glitter with fever.* MERCEDES *makes one last effort to restrain him. He pushes her aside, rather brusquely*]

[BEAULIEU *and* PEPITO *re-enter from the balcony*]

JULIAN. Let me go, I say —

[*Advances a few steps, glaring at* TEODORA *and* ERNESTO, *who stand side by side, their eyes fixed on* JULIAN]

JULIAN [*bitterly*]. Together — as usual! — I knew I heard them — [*To* MERCEDES] You said not! [*Rather peevishly*] Why does everyone lie to me? — Where are they going? Who stopped you — you traitors! You accursed —

[*Takes a step toward them, threateningly, but almost collapses, and leans for support against the piano*]

SEVERO [*hastening to his assistance*]. Julian — dear brother —

JULIAN [*tenderly*]. Ah, Severo, *you* are true to me — aren't you? They broke faith with me, didn't they? — Tricked me! — Wasn't hard, though, was it? — with my trust — my poor, blind trust. — And look — [*points feebly at them*] *together* — as always — *together!* [ERNESTO *and* TEODORA *move apart instantly*] And they take care — don't they? — good care — to keep out of — my reach. [TEODORA *takes one step toward him — slowly, shrinkingly — and then stops*] Nearer! Nearer!

[TEODORA *stretches out her hands appealingly, but does not approach him*]

TEODORA. Julian!

JULIAN [*with a gesture of command*]. Come here! Here! I order you. In my arms! [TEODORA *rushes forward and throws herself into* JULIAN'S *arms. He clasps her frantically. In triumphant tones to the others*] You see — she is mine! For all you may say — she is mine! [*To* TEODORA, *caressing her*] Tell me — you're mine?

TEODORA. Yes, Julian.

JULIAN [*holding her at half-arm's length, and looking at her intently*]. You lie — you lie!

TEODORA. No!

JULIAN [*draws her again to him*]. I could crush you — stifle you — as you deserve —

SEVERO. Yes — a thousand times.

JULIAN. But I look at her — *I look at her* — and — it was always so — I'm weak. [*With a sudden outburst, and pulling himself together*] Besides — [*Pointing to* ERNESTO] There's the culprit — the *real* traitor — [*With a commanding gesture*] Here! Nearer! [ERNESTO *goes to him*] Confess — you betrayed me —

ERNESTO [*deliberately — almost coldly*]. No, Julian.

JULIAN. You dare deny — without blush or falter — what the whole world says?

ERNESTO. The world lies, Julian — mine's the truth! I swear it!

JULIAN. By what?

ERNESTO. On my honor —

JULIAN [*interrupting, with bitter irony*]. His honor! [*To the others*] You hear? — his — precious — honor!

ERNESTO. Then, by my father's —

JULIAN [*fiercely*]. Silent! — I forbid you to sully my friend's name — as you sullied mine — you two.

ERNESTO. By what oath, then, oh, Julian, my more than brother, by what *sacred* — [JULIAN *makes a gesture for silence, and* ERNESTO *turns to* TEODORA] Teodora, what can we do? — to prove to him?

JULIAN [*to* SEVERO]. See, they take counsel of each other, openly — under my very eyes. — No more need of stealthy messages — letters sealed —

ERNESTO [*with a startled look at* TEODORA]. Tell him, Teo, what you wrote.

JULIAN. Oh, I know — the rendezvous — arranged — his rooms — [*To* SEVERO] You were right, brother — we should have read —

ERNESTO. Oh, if you only had! — [*Appealing to* TEODORA] Teodora, tell him —

JULIAN [*silencing them*]. Lies — more lies? A cypher! A lover's code! Oh, I see all so clearly now — [*Puts his hand to his eyes as if clearing his vision*]

TEODORA [*caressing* JULIAN]. No, no, Julian — the mists of fever blind you!

JULIAN [*with growing wrath*]. There was no fever, then — when I found you — with him. — The truth! — You *did* betray me — you two — confess!

TEODORA [*looking* JULIAN *straight in the eye*]. Julian, could my hand rest in yours without a tremor — could my eyes meet yours — thus?

JULIAN [*pushing her away*]. Yes — because you are shameless — *wanton* — in your guilt. [TEODORA *in despair turns and faces* ERNESTO; *they exchange glances of helpless appeal.* JULIAN *follows their mutual glance with frenzied intentness*] [*Wildly*] See! How love lights her eye when she turns to *him* — and the gleam in his — [*Puts his hand on* ERNESTO'S *eye*] Not from tears. [*Seizes* ERNESTO'S *wrist fiercely*] Confess!

ERNESTO [*almost coldly*]. To a lie — *no*, Julian!

JULIAN [*raising his arm threateningly*]. For *that* lie, then, I'll kill you.

ERNESTO [*on bended knee*]. Kill me, yes, Julian, but first forgive me!

JULIAN. That's confession — to ask forgiveness!

ERNESTO. For all your woe and pain — forgive me! Then —

JULIAN. No, you sha'n't escape conscience that way. — Live — you must live — and on your brow — for all men to see — I'll put the mark of shame — soon, by God's help, with my sword! Now — with my —

[*He strikes* ERNESTO *a stinging blow in the face.* ERNESTO *with a cry of horror recoils, steps backward slightly, raises himself to his full height, and makes a threatening step forward as if to return the blow*]

TEODORA [*with a shriek*]. Ernesto!

[ERNESTO *stops instantly at the sound of her voice, clasps his hands together, and stands rigid as a statue.* JULIAN, *after striking* ERNESTO, *totters, and only keeps from falling to the floor by leaning against the piano.* SEVERO *and* BEAULIEU *rush to support him, as he reels to and fro.* TEODORA *crosses to* ERNESTO, *as if to keep him from following* JULIAN *as the others lead him from the room*]

SEVERO [*to* JULIAN]. Come, come, Julian.

JULIAN [*faintly, looking at* TEODORA *and* ERNESTO *fixedly, and moving toward them*]. No — I've not done with them —

SEVERO. Leave them to me — leave them —

JULIAN [*at the door, looking back*]. Together — as always — *together!*

[*Goes out, supported by* BEAULIEU.]

[ERNESTO *stands dumb, motionless, gazing after* JULIAN, *as if actually stunned by the blow*]

TEODORA [*following him*]. Julian! [*As she reaches the door,* SEVERO *turns*]

SEVERO. No! [MERCEDES *and* PEPITO, *at a gesture from* SEVERO, *go into* JULIAN'S *room*]

TEODORA [*beseechingly*]. Surely, I may —

SEVERO [*vehemently*]. No!

[*Closes the door in her face*]

[TEODORA *turns to* ERNESTO. *They stare at each other in silence for some seconds*]

TEODORA. It was the madness of fever — that blow — you must forgive Julian.

ERNESTO. I love him for it — it makes the rest so easy. — Only, to go and leave you here, alone, with these pitiless —

TEODORA. Where are you going — what will you do?

ERNESTO. What is left me to do?

TEODORA [*affrighted*]. You'll not —

ERNESTO. After that blow — *you* wouldn't have me live?

TEODORA. Kill yourself — [*Tremulously*] No! no! [*With bitterness*] No! Fate took one life because of me — and for nothing, nothing, nothing! It shall not have another. [*With a commanding gesture*] Here — you remain — under my eyes — until this horror ends! — Or — come — [*Takes his hand.* ERNESTO *draws back*]

ERNESTO. Where?

TEODORA. To Julian. — *Now,* I'll take you to him —

ERNESTO [*proudly*]. No!

TEODORA. With me — yes. — In the clear light that comes with the end to guide every soul to its Maker, he will see the truth — and tell us so. [ERNESTO *shakes his head*]

TEODORA. He *must* tell us.

[*She leads* ERNESTO, *who is reluctant, toward* JULIAN'S *room. Before they reach the door, it opens*]

SEVERO [*at the threshold*]. Where are you going?

TEODORA [*drawing slightly back*]. To Julian.

SEVERO. You shall not.

TEODORA. Don Severo! — It is my right.

SEVERO [*in measured tones*]. You have no more right in this house.

TEODORA. But you will let me see — my husband.

SEVERO [*grimly*]. Oh, yes. [*Holds open the door*] You may see what you have done.

[TEODORA *passes him, stands a long time, gazing into the room; then, with a cry of anguish, staggers back, and falls on her knees, with her head buried in her arms*]

SEVERO [*standing over her*]. And — now — out with you! [*Calls*] Pepito!

PEPITO [*entering with* MERCEDES]. Yes, father —

SEVERO. You have my orders.

PEPITO. But, father —

SEVERO. Show this woman the door. [PEPITO *hesitates. In louder tones*]. You hear me?

PEPITO [*tremulously, appealing to* MERCEDES]. But my mother would rather —

SEVERO. Since *you* won't — then the servants! [*Crosses to the hall*]

MERCEDES [*commandingly, so that he stops quickly*]. Severo! — Donna Teodora was Julian's wife!

SEVERO. Oh, you want *ceremony* for this creature. Well, then, since you prefer, *I* shall —

[*Approaches* TEODORA]

[*From the moment that* ERNESTO *realizes the meaning of* TEODORA'S *cry, as she turns from* JULIAN'S *door, he stands dumb, motionless, staring vacantly into space, as if stunned into a graven image. — Now, as* SEVERO *advances to her, he fairly leaps between them, with arms uplifted, and in a quivering frenzy of wrath*]

ERNESTO [*in tones of mingled rage and tears*]. If you dare! If you *dare!* — So much as touch this woman — since death itself cannot shame you — nor stop you. — You've had your way — your dull, stupid, cruel, pitiless way. — In your ignorance, your folly, your vileness, you dared dishonor Julian's wife — you shall not dishonor mine. Brave, noble gentleman though he was, he could not guard *his* wife from you. You shall see how I can guard *mine!*

SEVERO [*turning triumphantly to* MERCEDES]. 'Mine' — you heard? 'Mine'! They've done with lies, now.

ERNESTO. Because, now, *now*, for the first time, it is the *truth!* And wonder of it all, your *lies* have made it truth. *Now*, but never till now. . . . If love had burned its way into my heart I'd have strangled it — or strangled myself — before a word passed my lips. I'd have plucked out my eyes before one gleam should betray me. Not even to myself — in the loneliness of night — would I have owned to such disloyalty. — And so it would have gone to the end of life — to the end of time — so that we could face him — we two — through all eternity — *unflinching*, though our very hearts *shrivelled* with passion. [*Turning to* TEODORA, *with arms outstretched*] Come, Teodora. [*She shrinks back — as if frightened — toward* MERCEDES] Come — you are mine, now, Teo, mine! *mine!!*

SEVERO. Ah, now we have the truth! It is as we said — *just* as we said.

ERNESTO [*with exultation that grows steadily from the start to the finish of his speech, so that at the end it thrills with tones of defiance and victory*]. Yes, now it is as you *would* have it! — Never until this moment was there thought of love between us. This woman's soul was pure as the sunbeams — my heart as clear as the skies. Teodora loved none but Julian. I was his loyal friend, ready to serve him to the death. [*With uplifted hand*] And that I swear to the Great Judge before whom Julian has gone to arraign her and me. So, too, it would have been to the end. But now! Now we are as you would have us — conscious of guilt, bold in shame. The life warmth fled from the slain Julian kindled in our hearts the flames of an accursed passion. — [*Rushes to the balcony and flings the doors wide open*] Go cry it from the windows and the house-tops, to all your neighbors, you and your kind! Say to them: 'Yes, we were right — they *are* lovers, Teodora and Ernesto — they confess it, without blame or blush!' And when they ask you who has wrought this — this *marvel* and infamy, you may answer them: 'You have done it — and I — and that man there — and *that* one — and that one! all of us, everywhere! We mixed the subtle poison and scattered it to the winds, so these two might breathe it in, to stifle conscience and drug the soul.' Yes, the triumph is *yours* — and you've done your hellish work well! Come, Teodora, [*taking her in his arms*] they have given you to me — my sacred love — my eternal life. Henceforth you rest in *my* arms — that strain to clasp you. — They've willed it so — they've willed it so — and let all righteous Heaven judge between them and us!

[*The last sentence is uttered in tones of thunderous defiance, as* ERNESTO *and* TEODORA *are making their way to the door*]

THE END

THE BONDS OF INTEREST

COMEDY IN A PROLOGUE AND THREE ACTS

By JACINTO BENAVENTE

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

This play is here reprinted for the reading public through the courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons.

Copyright, 1917,
By JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL.
All rights reserved.

To

RAFAEL GASSET

First presented at the Teatro Lara, Madrid, on the evening of the ninth of December, 1907.

CHARACTERS

Doña Sirena
Silvia
The Wife of Polichinelle
Columbine
Laura
Risela
Leander
Crispin
The Doctor
Polichinelle
Harlequin
The Captain
Pantaloon
The Innkeeper
The Secretary
1st and 2d Servants at the Inn
1st and 2d Constables

The action takes place in an imaginary country at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century

THE BONDS OF INTEREST

PROLOGUE

Spoken by CRISPIN

[*A conventional drop at the front, having a door in the middle, curtained*]

Here you have the mummer of the antique farce who enlivened in the country inns the hard-earned leisure of the carter, who made the simple rustics gape with wonder in the square of every rural town and village, who in the populous cities drew about him great bewildering assemblages, as in Paris, where Tabarin set up his scaffold on the Pont-Neuf and challenged the attention of the passers-by, from the learned doctor pausing a moment on his solemn errand to smooth out the wrinkles on his brow at some merry quip of old-time farce, to the light-hearted cutpurse who there whiled away his hours of ease as he cheated his hunger with a smile, to prelate and noble dame and great grandee in stately carriages, soldier and merchant and student and maid. Men of every rank and condition shared in the rejoicing — men who were never brought together in any other way — the grave laughing to see the laughter of the gay rather than at the wit of the farce, the wise with the foolish, the poor with the rich, so staid and formal in their ordinary aspect, and the rich to see the poor laugh, their consciences a little easier at the thought: "Even the poor can smile." For nothing is so contagious as the sympathy of a smile.

Sometimes our humble farce mounted up to Princes' Palaces on the whims of the mighty and the great; yet there its rogueries were not less free. It was the common heritage of great and small. Its rude jests, its sharp and biting sentences it took from the people, from that lowly wisdom of the poor which knows how to suffer and bear all, and which was softened in those days by resignation in men who did not expect too much of the world and so were able to laugh at the world without bitterness and without hate.

From its humble origins Lope de Rueda and Shakespere and Molière lifted it up, bestowing upon it high patents of nobility, and like enamoured princes of the fairy-tales, elevated poor Cinderella to the topmost thrones of Poetry and of Art. But our farce to-night cannot claim such distinguished lineage, contrived for your amusement by the inquiring spirit of a restless poet of to-day.

This is a little play of puppets, impossible in theme, without any reality at all. You will soon see how everything happens in it that could never happen, how its personages are not real men and women, nor the shadows of them, but dolls or marionettes of paste and cardboard, moving upon wires which are visible even in a little light and to the dimmest eye. They are the grotesque masks of the Italian *Commedia dell' Arte*, not as boisterous as they once were, because they have aged with the years and have been able to think much in so long a time. The author is aware that so primitive a spectacle is unworthy of the culture of these days; he throws himself upon your courtesy and upon your goodness of heart. He only asks that you should make yourselves as young as possible. The world has grown old, but art never can reconcile itself to growing old, and so, to seem young again, it descends to these fripperies. And that is the reason that these outworn puppets have presumed to come to amuse you to-night with their child's play.

ACT I

A plaza in a city. The façade of an Inn is at the right, having a practicable door, with a knocker upon it. Above the door is a sign which reads INN.

[LEANDER AND CRISPIN *enter from left*]

LEANDER. This must be a very great city, Crispin. Its riches and its power appear in everything.

CRISPIN. Yes, there are two cities. Pray God that we have chanced upon the better one!

LEANDER. Two cities do you say, Crispin? Ah! Now I understand — an old city and a new city, one on either side of the river.

CRISPIN. What has the river to do with it, or newness or age? I say two cities just as there are in every city in the world; one for people who arrive with money and the other for persons who arrive like us.

LEANDER. We are lucky to have arrived at all without falling into the hands of Justice. I should be heartily glad to stop here awhile and rest myself, for I am tired of this running about the world so continually.

CRISPIN. Not I! No, it is the natural condition of the free-born subjects of the Kingdom of Roguery, of whom am I, not to remain seated long in any one place, unless it be through compulsion, as to say in the galleys, where, believe me, they are very hard seats. But now since we have happened upon this city, and to all appearances it is a well fortified and provisioned one, let us like prudent captains map out our plan of battle beforehand, if we are to conquer it with any advantage to ourselves.

LEANDER. A pretty army we shall make to besiege it.

CRISPIN. We are men and we have to do with men.

LEANDER. All our wealth is on our backs. You were not willing to take off these clothes and sell them, when by doing so we could easily have obtained money.

CRISPIN. I would sooner take off my skin than my good clothes. As the world goes nothing is so important as appearances, and the clothes, as you must admit, are the first things to appear.

LEANDER. What are we going to do, Crispin? Hunger and fatigue have been too much for me. I am overcome; I cannot talk.

CRISPIN. There is nothing for us to do but to take advantage of our talents and our effrontery, for without effrontery talents are of no use. The best thing, as it seems to me, will be for you to talk as little as possible, but be very impressive when you do, and put on the airs of a gentleman of quality. From time to time then I will permit you to strike me across the back. When anybody asks you a question, reply mysteriously and if you open your mouth upon your own account, be sure that it is with dignity, as if you were pronouncing sentence. You are young; you have a fine presence. Until now you have known only how to dissipate your resources; this is the time for you to begin to profit by them. Put yourself in my hands. There is nothing so useful to a man as to have some one always at his heels to point out his merits, for modesty in one's self is imbecility, while self-praise is madness, and so between the two we come into disfavor with the world. Men are like merchandise; they are worth more or less according to the skill of the salesman who markets them. I tell you, though you were but muddy glass, I will so contrive that in my hands you shall pass for pure diamond. And now let us knock at the door of this inn, for surely it is the proper thing to have lodgings on the main square.

LEANDER. You say at this inn? But how are we going to pay?

CRISPIN. If we are to be stopped by a little thing like that then we had better search out an asylum or an almshouse or else beg on the streets, if so be that you incline to virtue. Or if to force, then back to the highway and cut the throat of the first passer-by. If we are to live upon our means, strictly speaking, we have no other means to live.

LEANDER. I have letters of introduction to persons of importance in this city, who will be able to lend us aid.

CRISPIN. Then tear those letters up; never think of such baseness again! Introduce yourself to no man when you are in need. Those would be pretty letters of credit indeed! To-day you will be received with the greatest courtesy; they will tell you that their houses and their persons are to be considered as yours. The next time you call, the servant will tell you that his

master is not at home. No, he is not expected soon . . . and at the next visit nobody will trouble so much as to open the door. This is a world of giving and taking, a shop, a mart, a place of exchange, and before you ask you have to offer.

LEANDER. But what can I offer when I have nothing?

CRISPIN. How low an opinion you must have of yourself! Is a man in himself, then, worth nothing? A man may be a soldier, and by his valor win great victories. He may be a husband or a lover, and with love's sweet, oblivious medicine, restore some noble dame to health, or some damsel of high degree, who has been pining away through melancholy. He may be the servant of some mighty and powerful lord, who becomes attached to him and raises him up through his favor, and he may be so many other things besides that I have not the breath even to begin to run them over. When one wants to climb, why any stair will do.

LEANDER. But if I have not even that stair?

CRISPIN. Then accept my shoulders, and I will lift you up. I offer you the top.

LEANDER. And if we both fall down upon the ground?

CRISPIN. God grant that it may be soft! [*Knocking at the inn-door*] Hello! Ho, within there! Hello, I say, in the inn! Devil of an innkeeper! Does no one answer? What sort of a tavern is this?

LEANDER. Why are you making all this noise when as yet you have scarcely begun to call?

CRISPIN. Because it is monstrous that they should make us wait like this! [*Calling again more loudly*] Hello within! Who's there, I say? Hello in the house! Hello, you thousand devils!

INNKEEPER [*within*]. Who's there? What knocking and what shouting at my door! Is this the way to stand and wait? Out, I say!

CRISPIN. It is too much! And now he will tell us that this dilapidated old tavern is a fit lodging for a gentleman.

[*The* INNKEEPER *and* TWO SERVANTS *come out of the Inn*]

INNKEEPER. Softly, sirs, softly; for this is not a tavern but an inn, and great gentlemen have been lodged in this house.

CRISPIN. I would like to have seen those same great gentlemen — gentle, a little more or less. What? It is easy enough to see by these rascals that they are not accustomed to waiting on persons of quality. They stand there like blockheads without running to do our service.

INNKEEPER. My life! But you are impertinent!

LEANDER. My servant is a little forward, perhaps. You will find him somewhat hasty in his temper. However, your inn will be good enough for the brief time that we shall be able to remain in it. Prepare an apartment for me and another for my servant, and let us spare these idle words.

INNKEEPER. I beg your pardon, sir. If you had only spoken before. . . . I don't know how it is, but somehow gentlemen are always so much more polite than their servants.

CRISPIN. The fact is my master is so good-natured that he will put up with anything. But I know what is proper for his service, and I have no mind to wink at villainy. Lead us to our apartments.

INNKEEPER. But where is your luggage?

CRISPIN. Do you suppose that we are carrying our luggage with us on our backs, like a soldier's knapsack, or trundling it like students' bundles in our hands? Know that my master has eight carts coming after him, which will arrive if he stays here long enough, and at that he will only remain for the time which is absolutely necessary to conclude the secret mission with which he has been intrusted in this city.

LEANDER. Will you be silent and hold your tongue? What secret is it possible to keep with you? If I am discovered through your impudence, through your misguided talk . . . [*He threatens and strikes* CRISPIN *with his sword*]

CRISPIN. Help! He is killing me! [*Running*]

INNKEEPER [*interposing between* LEANDER *and* CRISPIN]. Hold, sir!

LEANDER. Let me chastise him! The most intolerable of vices is this desire to talk.

INNKEEPER. Do not beat him, sir!

LEANDER. Let me at him! Let me at him! Will the slave never learn?

[*As he is about to strike* CRISPIN, CRISPIN *runs and hides himself*

behind the INNKEEPER, *who receives all the blows*]

CRISPIN [*crying out*]. Ay! Ay! Ay!

INNKEEPER. Ay, say I! For I got all the blows!

LEANDER [*to* CRISPIN]. Now you see what you have done. This poor man has received all the blows. Down! Down! Beg his pardon!

INNKEEPER. It will not be necessary, sir. I pardon him willingly. [*To the* SERVANTS] What are you doing standing there? Prepare the rooms in which the Emperor of Mantua is accustomed to reside when he is stopping in this house, and let dinner be made ready for these gentlemen.

CRISPIN. Perhaps it would be as well if I saw to that myself, otherwise they may delay and spoil everything, and commit a thousand blunders for which I shall be held responsible, for my master, as you see, is not a man to submit to insult. I am with you, sirrahs — and remember who it is you serve, for the greatest good fortune or the direst calamity in the world enters at this moment behind you through these doors.

[*The* SERVANTS, *followed by* CRISPIN, *re-enter the Inn*]

INNKEEPER [*to* LEANDER]. Will you be good enough to let me have your name, where you come from, and the business which brings you to this city?

LEANDER [*seeing* CRISPIN *re-enter from the Inn*]. My servant will let you have them. Learn not to bother me with foolish questions.

[*He goes into the Inn*]

CRISPIN. What have you done now? You have not dared to question my master? If you want to keep him so much as another hour in your house, never speak to him again. No! Not one word!

INNKEEPER. But the laws are very strict. It is absolutely necessary that the questions should be answered. The law in this city —

CRISPIN. Never mention the law to my master! Silence! Silence! And for shame! You do not know whom you have in your house; no, and if you did, you would not be wasting your time on these impertinences.

INNKEEPER. But am I not to be told at least —

CRISPIN. Bolt of Heaven! Silence! Or I will call my master, and he will tell you whatever he sees fit — and then you will not understand. Take care! Look to it that he wants for nothing! Wait on him with every one of your five senses, or you will have good reason to regret it! Have you no knowledge of men? Can't you read character? Don't you see who my master is? What? How is that? What do you say? No reply? . . . Come! Come! . . . In! . . .

[*He goes into the Inn, pushing the* INNKEEPER *before him. The* CAPTAIN *and* HARLEQUIN *enter from the left*]

HARLEQUIN. As we return from the fields which surround this fair city — and beyond a doubt they are the best part of it — it seems that without intending it we have happened upon this Inn. What a creature of habit is man! And surely it is a vile habit, this being obliged to eat every day.

CAPTAIN. The sweet music of your verses had quite deprived me of all thought. Delightful privilege of the poet!

HARLEQUIN. Which does not prevent him from being equally lacking upon his own part. The poet wants everything. I approach this Inn with fear. Will they consent to trust us to-day? If not, we must rely upon your sword.

CAPTAIN. My sword? The soldier's sword, like the poet's lyre, is little valued in this city of merchants and traders. We have fallen upon evil days.

HARLEQUIN. We have. Sublime poesy, which sings of great and glorious exploits, is no more. It is equally profitless to offer your genius to the great to praise or to lampoon them. Flattery and satire are both alike to them. They neither thank you for the one nor fear the other, nor do they read them. Aretino himself would have starved to death in these days.

CAPTAIN. But tell me, how is it with us? What is the position of the soldier? Because we were defeated in the late wars — more through these base traffickers who govern us and send us to defend their interests without enthusiasm and without arms, than through any power of the enemy, as if a man could fight with his whole heart for what he did not love — defeated by these traffickers who did not contribute so much as a single soldier to our ranks or lend one single penny to the cause but upon good interest and yet better

security; who, as soon as they scented danger and saw their pockets in jeopardy, threatened to make common cause with the enemy — now they blame us, they abuse us and despise us, and seek to economize out of our martial misery, which is the little pay that they give us, and would dismiss us if they dared, if they were not afraid that some day all those whom they have oppressed by their tyranny and their greed would rise up and turn against them. And woe to them when they do, if we remember that day on which side lie duty and justice!

HARLEQUIN. When that day comes you will find us at your side.

CAPTAIN. Poets cannot be depended upon for anything. Your spirits are like the opal, which looks different in every light. You are in an ecstasy to-day over what is about to be born, and to-morrow over what is in the last stages of dissolution. You have a special weakness for falling in love with ruins, which to my mind is a melancholy thing. And since as a rule you sit up all night, you more often see the sun set than the day break; you know more about going down than you do of rising.

HARLEQUIN. That cannot truthfully be said of me. I have often seen the sun rise when I had no place to lay my head. Besides, how can you expect a man to hail the day as blithely as the lark when it always breaks so unfortunately for him? — What say you? Shall we try our fate?

CAPTAIN. It cannot be avoided. Be seated, and let us await what our good host has in store.

HARLEQUIN [*calling into the Inn*]. Hello, there! Ho! Who serves to-day?

[*The* INNKEEPER *enters*]

INNKEEPER. Ah, gentlemen! Is it you? I am sorry, but there is no entertainment at the Inn to-day.

CAPTAIN. And for what reason, if it is proper to ask the question?

INNKEEPER. A proper question for you to ask. Do you suppose that I trust nobody for what is consumed in this house?

CAPTAIN. Ah! Is that the reason? And are we not persons of credit, who are to be trusted?

INNKEEPER. No; not by me. And as I never expect to collect anything, you have had all that courtesy requires out of me already. This being the case, you will be so kind as to remove yourselves from my door.

HARLEQUIN. Do you imply that there is nothing to be counted between us but money? Are all the praises that we have lavished upon your house in all parts of the country to go for nothing? I have even composed a sonnet in your honor, in which I celebrate the virtues of your stewed partridges and hare pie! And as for my friend, the Captain, you may rest assured that he alone would uphold the reputation of your hostelry against an army. Is that a feat which is worth nothing? Is there nothing but clinking of coins in your ears?

INNKEEPER. I am not in a jesting mood; it does not suit my humor. I want none of your sonnets, nor the Captain's sword either, which might better be employed in other business.

CAPTAIN. Name of Mars! You are right. Better employed upon an impudent rascal's back, flaying off his hide!

[*Threatening him and striking him with his sword*]

INNKEEPER [*crying out*]. What? How is this? You strike me? Help! Justice!

HARLEQUIN [*restraining the* CAPTAIN]. Don't run your head into a noose on account of such a worthless scamp.

CAPTAIN. I shall kill him.

[*Striking him*]

INNKEEPER. Help! Justice!

[*The* TWO SERVANTS *enter, running, from the Inn*]

SERVANTS. They are killing our master!

INNKEEPER. Save me!

CAPTAIN. Not one of them shall remain alive!

INNKEEPER. Will no one come?

[CRISPIN *and* LEANDER *enter*]

LEANDER. What is this brawl?

CRISPIN. In the presence of my master? Before the house where he resides? Is there no rest possible, nor quiet? Hold! Or I shall summon Justice. Order! Quiet!

INNKEEPER. This will be the ruin of me! With such a dignitary stopping in my house! —

HARLEQUIN. Who is he?

INNKEEPER. Never dare to ask me his name!

CAPTAIN. Your pardon, sir, if we have disturbed your rest, but this rascally villain —

INNKEEPER. It wasn't my fault, my lord. These unblushing scoundrels —

CAPTAIN. What? I? Unblushing — I? I can bear no more!

CRISPIN. Hold, sir Captain, for one is here who is able to redress your wrongs, if so be you have had them of this man.

INNKEEPER. Consider, sir, that for more than a month these fellows have eaten at my expense without the payment of one penny — without so much as the thought of payment; and now because I refuse to serve them to-day, they turn upon me.

HARLEQUIN. I do not turn because I am accustomed to face that which is unpleasant.

CAPTAIN. Is it reasonable that a soldier should not be given credit?

HARLEQUIN. Is it reasonable that a sonnet should be allowed to pass for nothing, although it is written with the best of flourishes in praise of his stewed partridges and hare pies? And all this upon credit on my part, for I have never tasted one of them, but only his eternal mutton and potatoes.

CRISPIN. These two noble gentlemen are right. It is infamous that a poet and a soldier should be denied in this manner.

HARLEQUIN. Ah, sir! You have a great soul!

CRISPIN. No, I have not — but my master, who is here present. Being a grand gentleman, there is nothing which appeals to him so much in the world as a poet or a soldier.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. You need have no doubt but that while he remains in this city you will be treated with the consideration you deserve. You shall want for nothing. Whatever expense you may be at in this Inn, is to be placed upon his account.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. And let the landlord look to it that you get your deserts!

INNKEEPER. Sir! . . .

CRISPIN. And don't be so stingy with those partridges and hairy pies. It is not proper that a poet like Signor Harlequin should be obliged to draw upon his imagination in his descriptions of such material things.

HARLEQUIN. What? Do you know my name?

CRISPIN. No, I do not; but my master, being such a great gentleman, knows all the poets who exist or who ever did exist in the world, provided always that they were worthy of the name.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. And none of them is more famous than you, Signor Harlequin. Whenever I consider that you have not been treated here with the respect which is your due —

INNKEEPER. Your pardon, sir. They shall be made welcome, as you desire. It is sufficient that you should be their security.

CAPTAIN. Sir, if I can be of service to you in any way . . .

CRISPIN. What? Is it a small service to be permitted to know you? O glorious Captain, worthy only to be sung by this immortal poet!

HARLEQUIN. Sir!

CAPTAIN. Sir!

HARLEQUIN. So my verses are known to you?

CRISPIN. How? Known? And if known would it ever be possible to forget them? Is not that wonderful sonnet yours, which begins:

"The soft hand which caresses and
which slays" . . .

HARLEQUIN. What?

CRISPIN. What?

"The soft hand which caresses and
which slays" . . .

It does not say what.

HARLEQUIN. Nonsense! No, that is not my sonnet.

CRISPIN. Then it is worthy of being yours. And you, Captain! Who is not familiar with your marvellous exploits? Was it not you who, alone, with twenty men, assaulted the Castle of the Red Rock in the famous battle of the Black Field?

CAPTAIN. You know, then?

CRISPIN. How? . . . Do I know? Oh! Many a time, transported, I have listened to my master recount the story of your prowess! Twenty men, twenty, and you in front of them, and in front of you the castle. Boom! Boom! Boom! from the castle, shots and bombards, darts and flaming squibs and boiling oil! And the twenty men all standing there like one man, and you in front of them! And from above: Boom! Boom! Boom! And the roll of the drums: Rum-a-tum-tum! And

the blare of the trumpets: Tara! Tara-ra! And you all the while there alone with your sword: Swish! Swish! Swish! A blow here, a blow there. Or without your sword . . . Above, below . . . A head, an arm . . .

[*He begins to rain blows about him right and left, and to kick, using his fists, his feet, and the flat side of his sword indifferently*]

SERVANTS. Ay! Ay! Oh! Oh!

INNKEEPER. Hold! Hold! Restrain yourself! You don't know what you are doing. You are all excited. . . . It is as if the battle were really taking place. . . .

CRISPIN. How? I am excited? Know that I always feel in my breast the *animus belli*, the thirst for war!

CAPTAIN. It seems almost as if you must have been there.

CRISPIN. To hear my master describe it is the same as being there. No, it is preferable to it. And is such a soldier, the hero of the Red Rocks in the Black Fields, to be insulted thus? Ah! How fortunate it is that my master was present, and that important business had brought him to this city, for he will see to it that you are accorded the consideration you deserve. So sublime a poet, so great a captain! . . . [*To the* SERVANTS] Quick! What are you doing there? Bring the best food that you have in the house and set it before these gentlemen. And first of all get a bottle of good wine; it will be a rare pleasure to my master to drink with them. He will esteem himself indeed fortunate. Don't stand there and stare! Quick! Bestir yourselves!

INNKEEPER. Run, run! I go . . . We are getting something out of this after all.

[*The* INNKEEPER *and the* TWO SERVANTS *run into the Inn*]

HARLEQUIN. Ah, sir! How can we ever repay you?

CAPTAIN. How? We certainly never shall . . .

CRISPIN. Let nobody speak of payment before my master. The very thought gives offense. Be seated, be seated. My master, who has wined and dined so many princes, so many noblemen at his table, will deem this an even greater pleasure.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. My master is not a man of many words; but, as you see, the few that he does speak, are, as it were, fraught with wisdom.

HARLEQUIN. His grandeur appears in everything.

CAPTAIN. You have no idea what a comfort it is to our drooping spirits to find a noble gentleman like you who condescends to treat us with consideration.

CRISPIN. Why, this is nothing to what he will condescend to do! I know that my master will never rest satisfied to stop at such a trifle. He will elevate you to his own level, and then hold you up beside him on the same exalted plane. He is just that kind of a man.

LEANDER [*to* CRISPIN]. Don't let your tongue run away with you, Crispin.

CRISPIN. My master is averse to foolish talk; but you will soon know him by his deeds.

[*The* INNKEEPER *and the* SERVANTS *reenter, bringing wine and provisions which they place upon the table*]

INNKEEPER. Here is the wine — and the dinner.

CRISPIN. Drink, drink and eat! See that they want for nothing; my master is agreeable. He will be responsible. His responsibility is fortunately not in question. If you would like anything you don't see, don't hesitate to ask for it. My master will order it. And let the landlord look to it that it is brought promptly, for verily at this business, he is the sorriest kind of a knave.

INNKEEPER. To be sure . . . I don't agree with you.

CRISPIN. Not another word! You insult my master.

CAPTAIN. Your very good health!

LEANDER. Your good healths, gentlemen! To the health of the greatest poet and the best soldier in the world!

HARLEQUIN. To the health of the noblest gentleman!

CAPTAIN. The most liberal and the most generous!

CRISPIN. In the world! Excuse me, but I must drink too, though it may seem presumptuous. But on a day like this, this day of days, which has brought together the sublimest poet, the bravest captain, the noblest gentleman, and the most faithful servant in the universe . . . [*They drink*] Now you will permit my master to retire. The important

business which brings him to the city admits of no further delay.

LEANDER. To be sure.

CRISPIN. You will not fail to return every day and present your respects to him?

HARLEQUIN. Every hour! And I am going to bring with me all the poets and all the musicians of my acquaintance, to serenade him with music and songs.

CAPTAIN. I shall bring my whole company with me with torches and banners.

LEANDER. You will offend my modesty.

CRISPIN. And now eat, drink! Mind you, sirrahs! About it! Quick! Serve these gentlemen. [*To the* CAPTAIN] A word in your ear. Are you out of money?

CAPTAIN. What shall I say?

CRISPIN. Say no more. [*To the* INNKEEPER] Eh! This way! Let these gentlemen have forty or fifty crowns on my master's account, as a present from him. Omit nothing! See that they are satisfied.

INNKEEPER. Don't worry, sir. Forty or fifty, did you say?

CRISPIN. While you are about it, better make it sixty. Your health, gentlemen!

CAPTAIN. Long life to the noblest gentleman in the world!

HARLEQUIN. Long life!

CRISPIN. Shout long life, too, you uncivil people.

INNKEEPER AND SERVANTS. Long life! Long life!

CRISPIN. Long life to the sublimest poet and the best soldier in the world!

ALL. Long life!

LEANDER [*to* CRISPIN]. Are you mad, Crispin? What are you doing? How are we ever going to get out of this?

CRISPIN. The same way that we got in. You see now poesy and arms are ours. On! We shall achieve the conquest of the world!

[*All exchange bows and salutations, after which* LEANDER *and* CRISPIN *go out upon the left, as they came in. The* CAPTAIN *and* HARLEQUIN *attack the dinner which is set before them by the* INNKEEPER *and the* SERVANTS, *who wait upon them assiduously with anticipation of their every want*]

ACT II

A garden with the façade of a pavilion opening upon it. DOÑA SIRENA *and* COLUMBINE *enter from the pavilion.*

SIRENA. Is it not enough to deprive a woman of her five senses, Columbine? Can it be possible that a lady should see herself placed in so embarrassing a position and by low, unfeeling people? How did you ever dare to show yourself in my presence with such a tale?

COLUMBINE. But sooner or later wouldn't you have had to know it?

SIRENA. I had rather have died first. But did they all say the same?

COLUMBINE. All, one after the other, exactly as I have told it to you. The tailor absolutely refuses to send you the gown until you have paid him everything that you owe.

SIRENA. Impudent rascal! Everything that I owe *him*. The barefaced highwayman! And does he not stand indebted for his reputation and his very credit in this city to me? Until I employed him in the decoration of my person he did not know, so to speak, what it was to dress a lady.

COLUMBINE. All the cooks and musicians and servants say the same. They refuse to play to-night or to appear at the fête unless they are all paid beforehand.

SIRENA. The rogues! The brood of vipers! Whence does such insolence spring? Were these people not born to serve? Are they to be paid nowadays in nothing but money? Is money the only thing which has value in the world? Woe unto her who is left without a husband to look after her, as I am, without male relatives, alas, without any masculine connection! A woman by herself is worth nothing in the world, be she never so noble or virtuous. O day foretold of the Apocalypse! Surely Antichrist has come!

COLUMBINE. I never saw you so put out before. I hardly know you. You have always been able to rise above these calamities.

SIRENA. Those were other days, Columbine. Then I had my youth to count on, and my beauty, as powerful allies. Princes and great grandees cast themselves at my feet.

COLUMBINE. But on the other hand you did not have the experience and knowledge of the world which you have

now. And as far as beauty is concerned, surely you never shone with such refulgence as to-day — that is, if you will listen to me.

SIRENA. Don't attempt to flatter me. Do you suppose that I should ever have got myself into such a fix if I had been the Doña Sirena of my twenties?

COLUMBINE. Your twenty suitors?

SIRENA. What do you think? I had no end of suitors. And you who have not yet begun upon twenty, you have not the sense to perceive what that means and to profit by it. I would never have believed it possible. Otherwise should I have adopted you for my niece if I had, though I saw myself abandoned by every man in the world and reduced to live alone with a maid-servant? If instead of wasting your youth on this impecunious Harlequin, this poet who can bring you nothing but ballads and verses, you had had the sense to make a proper use of your time, we should not be languishing now in this humiliating dilemma.

COLUMBINE. What do you expect? I am too young to resign myself to being loved without loving. If I am ever to become skilful in making others suffer for love of me, surely I must learn first what it is one suffers when one loves. And when I do, I am positive I shall be able to profit by it. I have not yet turned twenty, but you must not think because of that I have so little sense as to marry Harlequin.

SIRENA. I would not trust you. You are capricious, flighty, and allow yourself to be run away with by your imagination. But first let us consider what is to be done. How are we to extricate ourselves from this horrible dilemma? In a short time the guests will arrive — all persons of quality and importance, and among them Signor Polichinelle and his wife and daughter, who, for various reasons, are of more account to me than the rest. You know my house has been frequented of late by several noble gentlemen, somewhat frayed in their nobility, it is true, as I am, through want of means. For any one of them, the daughter of Signor Polichinelle, with her rich dowry and the priceless sum which she will inherit upon her father's death, would be an untold treasure. She has many suitors, but I interpose my influence with Signor Polichinelle and with his wife in favor of them all. Whichever one should be fortunate I know that he will requite my good offices with his bounty, because I have made them all sign an agreement which assures me of it. I have no other means than this to repair my state. If now some rich merchant or some trader by some lucky chance should fall in love with you . . . Ah, who can say? This house might become again what it was in other days. But if the insolence of these people breaks out to-night, if I cannot give the fête . . . No! I cannot think of it! It would be the death of me!

COLUMBINE. Do not trouble yourself, Doña Sirena. We have enough in the house to provide the entertainment. As for the music and the servants, Signor Harlequin will be able to supply them — he is not a poet and in love with me for nothing. Many singers and choice spirits of his acquaintance will willingly lend themselves to any adventure. You will see that nothing will be lacking, and your guests will all say that they have never been present at so marvellous a fête in their lives.

SIRENA. Ah, Columbine! If that could only be, how greatly you would rise in my estimation! Run, run and seek out your poet. . . . There is no time to lose.

COLUMBINE. My poet? Surely he is walking up and down now on the other side of the garden, waiting for a sign.

SIRENA. I fear it would not be proper for me to be present at your interview. I ought not to demean myself by soliciting his favors. I leave all that to you. Let nothing be wanting at the fête and you shall be well repaid, for these terrible straits through which we are passing to-night cannot continue forever — or else I am not Doña Sirena!

COLUMBINE. All will be well. Have no fear.

[DOÑA SIRENA *goes out through the pavilion*]

COLUMBINE [*stepping toward the right and calling*]. Harlequin! Harlequin! [CRISPIN *enters*] It isn't he!

CRISPIN. Be not afraid, beautiful Columbine, mistress of the mightiest poet, who yet has not been able to heighten in his verses the splendors of your charm. If the picture must always be different from reality, the advantage in this case is all on the side of reality. You can imagine, no doubt, what the picture must have been.

COLUMBINE. Are you a poet, too, or only a courtier and a flatterer?

CRISPIN. I am the best friend of your lover Harlequin, although I only met him to-day; but he has had ample proof of my friendship in this brief time. My greatest desire has been to salute you, and Signor Harlequin would not have been the poet that I take him for, had he not trusted to my friendship implicitly. But for his confidence I should have been in danger of falling in love with you simply upon the opportunity which he has afforded me of seeing you.

COLUMBINE. Signor Harlequin trusted as much in my love as he did to your friendship. Don't take so much credit to yourself. It is as foolish to trust a man while he lives as a woman while she loves.

CRISPIN. Now I see that you are not so fatal to the sight as to the ear.

COLUMBINE. Pardon me. Before the fête to-night I must speak with Signor Harlequin, and . . .

CRISPIN. It will not be necessary. That is why I have come, a poor ambassador from him and from my master, who stoops to kiss your hand.

COLUMBINE. Who is your master, if I may ask that question?

CRISPIN. The noblest and most powerful gentleman in the world. Permit me for the present not to mention his name. Soon it will be known. My master desires to salute Doña Sirena and to be present at her fête to-night.

COLUMBINE. At her fête? Don't you know . . .

CRISPIN. I know everything. That is my business — to investigate. I know that there were certain inconveniences which threatened to becloud it; but there will be none. Everything is provided for.

COLUMBINE. What! Then you do know?

CRISPIN. I assure you everything is provided for — a sumptuous reception, lights and fireworks, musicians and sweet song. It will be the most brilliant fête which ever was in the world.

COLUMBINE. Ah, then you are an enchanter?

CRISPIN. Now you begin to know me. But I shall only tell you that I do not bring good fortune with me for nothing. The people of this city are so intelligent that I am sure they will be incapable of frowning upon it and discouraging it with foolish scruples when they see it arrive. My master knows that Signor Polichinelle and his only daughter, the beautiful Silvia, the richest heiress in the city, are to be present at the fête to-night. My master has to fall in love with her, my master has to marry her; and my master will know how to requite in fitting fashion the good offices of Doña Sirena and of yourself in the matter, if so be that you do him the honor to assist in his suit.

COLUMBINE. Your speech is impertinent. Such boldness gives offense.

CRISPIN. Time presses and I have no leisure to pay compliments.

COLUMBINE. If the master is to be judged by the man . . .

CRISPIN. Reassure yourself. You will find my master the most courteous, the most affable gentleman in the world. My effrontery permits him to be modest. The hard necessities of life sometimes compel the noblest cavalier to descend to the devices of the ruffian, just as sometimes they oblige the noblest ladies, in order to maintain their state, to stoop to menial tricks, and this mixture of ruin and nobility in one person is out of harmony with nature. It is better to divide among two persons that which is usually found confused clumsily and joined in one. My master and myself, as being one person, are each a part of the other. Would it could be always so! We have all within ourselves a great and splendid gentleman of lofty hopes and towering ideals, capable of everything that is noble and everything that is good — and by his side, a humble servant born to forlorn hopes and miserable and hidden things, who employs himself in the base actions to which we are enforced by life. The art of living is so to separate the two that when we fall into any ignominy we can say: "It was not my fault; it was not I. It was my servant." In the greatest misery to which we sink there is always something in us which rises superior to ourselves. We should despise ourselves too much if we did not believe that we were better than our lives. Of course you know who my master is: he is the one of the towering thoughts, of the lofty, beautiful ideals. Of course you know who I am: I am the one of the forlorn and hidden things, the one who grovels and toils on the ground, delving among falsehood and humiliation and

lies. Only there is something in me which redeems me and elevates me in my own eyes. It is the loyalty of my service, this loyalty which humiliates and abases itself that another may fly, that he may always be the lord of the towering thoughts, of the lofty, beautiful ideals.

[*Music is heard in the distance*]

COLUMBINE. What is this music?

CRISPIN. The music which my master is bringing with him to the fête with all his pages and all the attendants of his train, accompanied by a great court of poets and singers presided over by Signor Harlequin, and an entire legion of soldiers with the Captain at their head, illuminating his coming with torches, with rockets and red fire.

COLUMBINE. Who is your master, that he is able to do so much? I run to tell my lady. . . .

CRISPIN. It will not be necessary. She is here.

[DOÑA SIRENA *enters from the pavilion*]

SIRENA. What is this? Who has prepared this music? What troop of people is arriving at my door?

COLUMBINE. Ask no questions. Know that to-day a great gentleman has arrived in this city, and it is he who offers you this fête to-night. His servant will tell you everything. I hardly know myself whether I have been talking to a great rogue or a great madman. Whichever it is, I assure you that he is a most extraordinary man.

SIRENA. Then it is not Harlequin?

COLUMBINE. Ask no questions. It is all a work of magic!

CRISPIN. Doña Sirena, my master begs permission to kiss your hand. So great a lady and so noble a gentleman ought not, when they meet, to descend to indignities inappropriate to their state. That is why, before he arrives, I have come to tell you everything. I am acquainted with a thousand notable exploits of your history, which should I but refer to them, would be sufficient to assure me attention. But it might seem impertinence to mention them. [*Handing her a paper*] My master acknowledges in this paper over his signature the great sum which he will be in your debt should you be able to fulfill upon your part that which he has here the honor to propose.

SIRENA. What paper and what debt is this? [*Reading the paper to herself*] How? A hundred thousand crowns at once and an equal quantity upon the death of Signor Polichinelle, if your master succeeds in marrying his daughter? What insolence and what infamy have we here? And to a lady! Do you know to whom you are speaking? Do you know what house this is?

CRISPIN. Doña Sirena! Forego your wrath. There is nobody present to warrant such concern. Put that paper away with the others, and let us not refer to the matter again. My master proposes nothing which is improper to you, nor would you consent that he should do so. Whatever may happen hereafter will be the work of chance and of love. I, the servant, was the one who set this unworthy snare. You are ever the noble dame, my master the virtuous cavalier, and as you meet in this festival to-night, you will talk of a thousand gallant and priceless things, as your guests stroll by and whisper enviously in praise of the ladies' beauty and the exquisite artfulness of their dress, the splendor and magnificence of the entertainment, the sweetness of the music, the nimble grace of the dancers' feet. And who is to say that this is not the whole story? Is not life just this — a fête in which the music serves to cover up the words, the words to cover up the thoughts? Then let the music sound, let conversation flash and sparkle with its smiles, let the supper be well served — this is all that concerns the guests. See, here is my master, who comes to salute you in all courtesy.

[LEANDER, HARLEQUIN, *and the* CAPTAIN *enter from the right*]

LEANDER. Doña Sirena, I kiss your hand.

SIRENA. Sir . . .

LEANDER. My servant has already told you in my name much more than I myself could say.

CRISPIN. Being a gentleman of discretion, my master is a man of few words. His admiration is mute.

HARLEQUIN. He wisely knows how to admire.

CAPTAIN. True merit.

HARLEQUIN. True valor.

CAPTAIN. The divine art of poesy.

HARLEQUIN. The incomparable science of war.

CAPTAIN. His greatness appears in everything!

HARLEQUIN. He is the noblest gentleman in the world.

CAPTAIN. My sword shall always be at his service.

HARLEQUIN. I shall dedicate my greatest poem to his glory.

CRISPIN. Enough! Enough! You will offend his native modesty. See how he tries to hide himself and slip away. He is a violet.

SIRENA. Surely he has no need to speak for himself who can make others talk like this in his praise.

[*After bows and salutations the men all withdraw upon the right,* DOÑA SIRENA *and* COLUMBINE *remaining alone*]

SIRENA. What do you think of this, Columbine?

COLUMBINE. I think that the master is most attractive in his figure and the servant most captivating in his impertinence.

SIRENA. We shall take advantage of them both. For either I know nothing of the world or about men, or else fortune this day has set her foot within my doors.

COLUMBINE. Surely then it must be fortune, for you do know something of the world, and about men — what don't you know!

SIRENA. Here are Risela and Laura, the first to arrive.

COLUMBINE. When were they the last at anything? I leave them to you; I must not lose sight of our cavalier.

[*She goes out to the right.* LAURA *and* RISELA *enter*]

SIRENA. My dears! Do you know, I was beginning to worry already for fear that you would not come?

LAURA. What? Is it really so late?

SIRENA. Naturally it is late before I worry about you.

RISELA. We were obliged to disappoint at two other fêtes so as not to miss yours.

LAURA. Though we understood that you might not be able to give it to-night. We heard that you were indisposed.

SIRENA. If only to rebuke gossipers I should have given it though I had died.

RISELA. And we should have been present at it even though we had died.

LAURA. But of course you have not heard the news?

RISELA. Nobody is talking of anything else.

LAURA. A mysterious personage has arrived in the city. Some say that he is a secret ambassador from Venice or from France.

RISELA. Others say that he has come to seek a wife for the Grand Turk.

LAURA. They say he is beautiful as an Adonis.

RISELA. If we could only manage to meet him! — What a pity! You ought to have invited him to your fête.

SIRENA. It was not necessary, my dears. He himself sent an ambassador begging permission to come. He is now in my house, and I have not the slightest doubt but that you will be talking to him soon.

LAURA. What is that? I told you that we made no mistake when we came. Something was sure to happen.

RISELA. How we shall be envied to-night!

LAURA. Everybody is mad to know him.

SIRENA. It was no effort for me. It was sufficient for him to hear that I was receiving in my house.

RISELA. Of course — the old story. No person of importance ever arrives in the city, but it seems he runs at once and pays his attentions to you.

LAURA. I am impatient to see him: Lead us to him, on your life!

RISELA. Yes! Take us where he is.

SIRENA. I beg your pardons — Signor Polichinelle arriving with his family. But, my dears, you will not wait. You need no introductions.

RISELA. Certainly not! Come, Laura.

LAURA. Come, Risela, before the crowd grows too great and it is impossible to get near.

[LAURA *and* RISELA *go out to the right.* POLICHINELLE, *the* WIFE OF POLICHINELLE, *and* SILVIA *enter*]

SIRENA. O, Signor Polichinelle! I was afraid you were not coming. Until now I really did not know whether or not I was to have a fête!

POLICHINELLE. It was not my fault; it was my wife's. With forty gowns to select from, she can never make up her mind which to put on.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Yes, if I were to please him I should make an exhibition of myself. Any suggestion will do. As it is, you see that I have really not had time to put on anything.

SIRENA. But you never were more beautiful!

POLICHINELLE. Well, she is not displaying one-half of her jewels. If she

were, she could not support the weight of the treasure.

SIRENA. Who has a better right to be proud than you have, Signor Polichinelle? What your wife displays are the riches which you have acquired by your labor.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. I tell him this is the time to enjoy them. He ought to be ambitious and seek to rise in the world. Instead, all he thinks about is how he can marry his daughter to some trader.

SIRENA. O, Signor Polichinelle! Your daughter deserves a great deal better than a trader. Surely you hold your daughter far too high for trade. Such a thing is not to be thought of for one moment. You have no right to sacrifice her heart to a bargain. What do you say, Silvia?

POLICHINELLE. She would prefer some waxed-up dandy. Instead of listening to my advice, she reads novels and poetry. It disgusts me.

SILVIA. I always do as my father says, unless it is displeasing to my mother or distasteful to me.

SIRENA. You speak very sensibly.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Her father has an idea that there is nothing but money to be had in the world.

POLICHINELLE. I have an idea that without money there is nothing to be had out of the world. Money is the one thing which counts. It buys everything.

SIRENA. Oh, I cannot hear you talk like that! What of virtue, what of intelligence, what of noble blood?

POLICHINELLE. They all have their price. You know it. And nobody knows it better than I do, for I have bought heavily in those lines, and found them reasonable.

SIRENA. O, Signor Polichinelle! You are in a playful humor this evening. You know very well that money will not buy everything, and if your daughter should fall in love with some noble gentleman, you would not dream of attempting to oppose her. I can see that you have a father's heart.

POLICHINELLE. I have. I would do anything for my daughter.

SIRENA. Even ruin yourself?

POLICHINELLE. That would not be anything for my daughter. Why, I would steal first, rob, murder — anything . . .

SIRENA. I felt sure that you must know some way to recoup yourself. But the fête is crowded already! Come with me, Silvia. I have picked out a handsome gentleman to dance with you. You will make a striking couple — ideal!

[*All go out upon the right except* SIGNOR POLICHINELLE, *who is detained as he is about to do so by* CRISPIN, *who enters and accosts him*]

CRISPIN. Signor Polichinelle! With your permission . . . A word with you . . .

POLICHINELLE. Who calls me? What do you want?

CRISPIN. You don't remember me? It is not surprising. Time blots out everything, and when what has been blotted out was unpleasant, after a while we do not remember even the blot, but hurry and paint over it with bright colors, like these with which you now hide your capers from the world. Why, when I knew you, Signor Polichinelle, you had hard work to cover your nakedness with a couple of muddy rags!

POLICHINELLE. Who are you and where did you know me?

CRISPIN. I was a mere boy then; you were a grown man. But you cannot have forgotten so soon all those glorious exploits on the high seas, all those victories gained over the Turks, to which we contributed not a little with our heroic strength, both pulling chained at the same noble oar in the same victorious galley?

POLICHINELLE. Impudent scoundrel! Silence, or —

CRISPIN. Or you will do with me as you did with your first master in Naples, or with your first wife in Bologna, or with that usurious Jew in Venice?

POLICHINELLE. Silence! Who are you who know so much and talk so freely?

CRISPIN. I am — what you were. One who will come to be what you are — as you have done. Not with the same violence as you, for these are other days and only madmen commit murder now, and lovers, and poor ignorant wretches who fall armed upon the wayfarer in dark alleys or along the solitary highway. Despicable gallows-birds! Negligible!

POLICHINELLE. What do you want of me? Money, is it not? Well, we can meet again; this is not the place. . . .

CRISPIN. Do not trouble yourself

about your money. I only want to be your friend, your ally, as in those days.

POLICHINELLE. What can I do for you?

CRISPIN. Nothing; for to-day I am the one who is going to do for you, and oblige you with a warning. [*Directing him to look off upon the right*] Do you see your daughter there — how she is dancing with that young gentleman? How coyly she blushes at his gallant compliments! Well, that gentleman is my master.

POLICHINELLE. Your master? Then he must be an adventurer, a rogue, a blackguard, like . . .

CRISPIN. Like us, you were going to say? No, he is more dangerous than we, because, as you see, he has a fine figure, and there is a mystery and an enchantment in his glance and a sweetness in his voice which go straight to the heart, and which stir it as at the recital of some sad tale. Is not this enough to make any woman fall in love? Never say that I did not warn you. Run and separate your daughter from this man and never permit her to dance with him again, no, nor to speak to him, so long as she shall live.

POLICHINELLE. Do you mean to say that he is your master and is this the way you serve him?

CRISPIN. Are you surprised? Have you forgotten already how it was when you were a servant? And I have not planned to assassinate him yet.

POLICHINELLE. You are right. A master is always despicable. But what interest have you in serving me?

CRISPIN. To come safe into some good port, as we often did when we rowed together at the oar. Then sometimes you used to say to me: "You are stronger than I, row for me." In this galley in which we are to-day, you are stronger than I. Row for me, for your faithful friend of other days, for life is a horrible vile galley and I have rowed so long.

[*He goes out by the way he came in.* DOÑA SIRENA, *the* WIFE OF POLICHINELLE, RISELA, *and* LAURA *re-enter*]

LAURA. Only Doña Sirena could have given such a fête!

RISELA. To-night she has outstripped all the others.

SIRENA. The presence of so distinguished a gentleman was an added attraction.

POLICHINELLE. But Silvia? Where is Silvia? What have you done with my daughter?

SIRENA. Do not disturb yourself, Signor Polichinelle. Your daughter is in excellent hands, and you may rest assured that she will remain in them as long as she is in my house.

RISELA. There were no attentions for any one but her.

LAURA. All the smiles were for her.

RISELA. And all the sighs!

POLICHINELLE. Whose? This mysterious gentleman's? I do not like it. This must stop —

SIRENA. But Signor Polichinelle!

POLICHINELLE. Away! Let me be! I know what I am doing.

[*He rushes out*]

SIRENA. What is the matter? What infatuation is this?

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Now you see what sort of man he is. He is going to commit an outrage on that gentleman. He wants to marry his daughter to a trader, does he — a clinker of worthless coin? He wants to make her unhappy for the rest of her life.

SIRENA. No, anything rather than that! Remember — you are her mother and this is the time for you to interpose your authority.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Look! He has spoken to him and the cavalier drops Silvia's hand and retires, hanging his head.

LAURA. And now Signor Polichinelle is attacking your daughter!

SIRENA. Come! Come! Such conduct cannot be tolerated in my house.

RISELA. Signora Polichinelle, in spite of your riches you are an unfortunate woman.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Would you believe it, he even forgets himself so far sometimes as to turn upon me?

LAURA. Is it possible? And are you a woman to submit to that?

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. He makes it up afterward by giving me a handsome present.

SIRENA. Well, there are husbands of my acquaintance who never even think of making up. . . .

[*They all go out.* LEANDER *and* CRISPIN *enter*]

CRISPIN. What is this sadness, this dejection? I expected to find you in better spirits.

LEANDER. I was never unfortunate till now; at least it never mattered to

me whether or not I was unfortunate. Let us fly, Crispin, let us fly from this city before any one can discover us and find out who we are.

CRISPIN. If we fly it will be after every one has discovered us and they are running after us to detain us and bring us back in spite of ourselves. It would be most discourteous to depart with such scant ceremony without bidding our attentive friends good-by.

LEANDER. Do not jest, Crispin; I am in despair.

CRISPIN. So you are. And just when our hopes are under fullest sail.

LEANDER. What could you expect? You wanted me to pretend to be in love, but I have not been able to pretend it.

CRISPIN. Why not?

LEANDER. Because I love — I love in spirit and in truth!

CRISPIN. Silvia? Is that what you are complaining about?

LEANDER. I never believed it possible a man could love like this. I never believed that I could ever love. Through all my wandering life along the dusty roads, I was not only the one who passed, I was the one who fled, the enemy of the harvest and the field, the enemy of man, enemy of sunshine and the day. Sometimes the fruit of the wayside tree, stolen, not given, left some savor of joy on my parched lips, and sometimes, after many a bitter day, resting at night beneath the stars, the calm repose of heaven would invite and soothe me to a dream of something that might be in my life like that calm night sky, brooding infinite over my soul — serene! And so to-night, in the enchantment of this fête, it seemed to me as if there had come a calm, a peace into my life — and I was dreaming! Ah! How I did dream! But to-morrow it will be again the bitter flight with justice at our heels, and I cannot bear that they should take me here where she is, and where she may ever have cause to be ashamed at having known me.

CRISPIN. Why, I thought that you had been received with favor! And I was not the only one who noticed it. Doña Sirena and our good friends, the Captain and the poet, have been most eloquent in your praises. To that rare excellent mother, the Wife of Polichinelle, who thinks of nothing but how she can relate herself by marriage to some nobleman, you have seemed the son-in-law of her dreams. As for Signor Polichinelle . . .

LEANDER. He knows . . . he suspects . . .

CRISPIN. Naturally. It is not so easy to deceive Signor Polichinelle as it is an ordinary man. An old fox like him has to be cheated truthfully. I decided that the best thing for us to do was to tell him everything.

LEANDER. How so?

CRISPIN. Obviously. He knows me of old. When I told him that you were my master, he rightly supposed that the master must be worthy of the man. And upon my part, in appreciation of his confidence, I warned him not to permit you under any circumstances to come near to or speak with his daughter.

LEANDER. You did? Then what have I to hope?

CRISPIN. You are a fool! Why, that Signor Polichinelle will exert all his authority to prevent you from meeting her.

LEANDER. I do not understand.

CRISPIN. In that way he will become our most powerful ally, for if he opposes it, that will be enough to make his wife take the opposite side, and the daughter will fall in love with you madly. You have no idea what a young and beautiful daughter of a rich father, who has been brought up to the gratification of her every whim, can do when she finds out for the first time in her life that somebody is opposing her wishes. I am certain that this very night, before the fête is over, she will find some way of eluding the vigilance of her father at whatever cost, and return to speak with you.

LEANDER. But can't you see that Signor Polichinelle is nothing to me, no, nor the wide world either? It is she, only she! It is to her that I am unwilling to appear unworthy or mean, it is to her — to her that I cannot lie.

CRISPIN. Bah! Enough of this nonsense! Don't tell me that. It is too late to draw back. Think what will happen if we vacillate now and hesitate in going on. You say that you have fallen in love? Well, this real love will serve us better than if it were put on. Otherwise you would have wanted to get through with it too quickly. If insolence and effrontery are the only qualities which are of use elsewhere, in love a faint suggestion of timidity is of

advantage to a man. Timidity in a man always makes the woman bolder. If you don't believe it, here is the innocent Silvia now, skulking in the shadows and only waiting for a chance to come near until I retire or am concealed.

LEANDER. Silvia, do you say?

CRISPIN. Hush! You may frighten her. When she is with you, remember, discretion — only a few words, very few. Adore her, admire her, contemplate her, and let the enchantment of this night of pallid blue speak for you, propitious as it is to love, and whisper to her in the music whose soft notes die away amid the foliage and fall upon our ears like sad overtones of this festival of joy.

LEANDER. Do not trifle, Crispin! Do not trifle with my love! It will be my death.

CRISPIN. Why should I trifle with it? I know, too, it is not always well to grovel on the ground. Sometimes we must soar and mount up into the sky better to dominate the earth. Mount now and soar — and I will grovel still. The world lies in our hands!

[*He goes out to the right.* SILVIA *enters*]

LEANDER. Silvia!

SILVIA. Is it you? You must pardon me. I did not expect to find you here.

LEANDER. I fly from the festival. I am saddened by this joy.

SILVIA. What? You, too?

LEANDER. Too, do you say? Does joy sadden you, too?

SILVIA. My father is angry with me. He never spoke to me like this before. And he was discourteous to you. Will you forgive him?

LEANDER. Yes. I forgive him everything. But you must not make him angry upon my account. Return to the company. They will be looking for you. If they find you here with me . . .

SILVIA. You are right. But you must come, too. Why should you be so sad?

LEANDER. No, I must slip away without anybody seeing me, without their knowing I am gone. I must go far away.

SILVIA. What? But you have important business in the city. I know you have. . . . You will have to stay a long, long time.

LEANDER. No, no! Not another day, not another hour!

SILVIA. But then . . . You have not lied to me?

LEANDER. Lied? No! Don't say that I have lied! No; this is the one truth of my whole life — this dream from which there should be no awakening!

[*The music of a song is heard in the distance, continuing until the curtain falls*]

SILVIA. It is Harlequin, singing. . . . What is the matter? You are crying. Is it the music which makes you cry? Why will you not tell me what it is that makes you cry?

LEANDER. What makes me cry? The song will tell you. Listen to the song!

SILVIA. We can hear only the music; the words are lost, it is so far away. But don't you know it? It is a song to the silence of the night. It is called the "Kingdom of the Soul." You must know it.

LEANDER. Say it over to me.

SILVIA:

The amorous night above the silent lover
Across the blue heaven spreads a nuptial veil.
The night has strewn its diamonds on the cover
Of a moonlit sky in drowsy August pale.
The garden in the shade now knows no color,
Deep in the shadow of its obscurity
Lightly the leaflets flutter, sweetly smells the flower,
And love broods there in silent sympathy.

You voices which sigh, you voices which sing,
You voices which whisper sweet phrases of love,
Intruders you are and a blasphemous thing,
Like an oath at night-tide in a prayer sped above.
Great Spirit of Silence, whom I adore,
There is in your silence the ineffable voice
Of those who have died loving in silence of yore,
Of those who were silent and died of their love;
Of those in their lives whose great love was such
They were unable to tell it, their love was so much!
Yours are the voices which nightly I hear,

Whispers of love and eternity near.

Mother of my soul, the light of this star,
Is it not the light of your eyes,
Which, like a drop of God's blood,
Trembles in the night
And fades at sunrise?
Tell him whom I love, I never shall love
More than him on the earth,
And when he fades away, light of my eyes,
I shall kiss at sunrise
But the light of thy star!

LEANDER:

Mother of my soul, I never have loved
More than you on the earth.
And when you fade away, light of my eyes,
I shall kiss at sunrise
The light of thy star.

[*They remain in silence, embracing and gazing into each other's eyes*]

CRISPIN [*who appears at the right — to himself*]

Poesy and night and madness of the lover . . .
All has to serve us that to our net shall come.
The victory is sure! Courage, charge and over!
Who shall overcome us when love beats the drum?

[SILVIA *and* LEANDER *move slowly off to the right, locked in each other's arms.* CRISPIN *follows them in silence, without being seen. Slowly the curtain descends*]

ACT III

A room in LEANDER'S *house.*

[CRISPIN, *the* CAPTAIN, *and* HARLEQUIN *enter from the right*]

CRISPIN. Enter, gentlemen, and be seated. Will you take something? Let me give orders to have it brought. Hello there! Ho!

CAPTAIN. No! By no means! We can accept nothing.

HARLEQUIN. We came merely to offer our services to your master after what we have just heard.

CRISPIN. Incredible treachery, which, believe me, shall not be suffered to remain unpunished! I promise you if Signor Polichinelle ever puts himself within the reach of my hands —

HARLEQUIN. Ah! Now you see what an advantage is possessed by us poets! I have him always within the reach of my verses. Oh! What a terrible satire I am thinking of writing against him! The cutthroat! Old reprobate!

CAPTAIN. But you say your master was not so much as even wounded?

CRISPIN. It might have killed him just the same. Imagine! Set upon by a dozen ruffians absolutely without warning. . . . Thanks, though, to his bravery, to his skill, to my cries . . .

HARLEQUIN. Do you say that it happened at night as your master was talking to Silvia over the wall of her garden?

CRISPIN. Naturally, my master had already been advised of what might happen. But you know what sort of man he is. He is not a person to be deterred by anything.

CAPTAIN. He ought to have notified us, however.

HARLEQUIN. He ought, certainly, to have notified the Captain. He would have been delighted to have lent his aid.

CRISPIN. You know what my master is. He is a host in himself.

CAPTAIN. But you say that he caught one of the ruffians by the nape of the neck, and the rascal confessed that it had all been planned and arranged by Signor Polichinelle beforehand so as to rid himself of your master?

CRISPIN. Who else could have had any interest in it? His daughter is in love with my master; her father wants to marry her to suit himself. My master is opposing his plans, and Signor Polichinelle has known all his life how to get rid of disturbances. Didn't he become a widower twice in a very short time? Hasn't he inherited all that his relatives had, irrespective of age, whether they were older or younger than he? Everybody knows it; nobody will say that I do him injustice. Ah! the riches of Signor Polichinelle are an affront to our intelligence, a discouragement to honest labor. A man like Signor Polichinelle could remain rich only among a base and degenerate people.

HARLEQUIN. I agree with you. I

intend to say all this in my satire — of course, without mentioning names. Poetry does not admit of such license.

CRISPIN. Much good, then, your satire will do!

CAPTAIN. Leave him to me! Leave him to me! I promise you if he once puts himself within the reach of my sword — ah! But I am confident that he never will.

CRISPIN. My master would never consent to have an insult offered to Signor Polichinelle. After all, he is Silvia's father. The point is to let people in the city understand that an attempt has been made to assassinate my master. Is that old fox to be allowed to stifle the honest affection, the generous passion of his daughter? It is impossible.

HARLEQUIN. It is impossible. Love will find a way.

CRISPIN. If my master had been some impecunious beggar . . . Tell me, isn't Signor Polichinelle the one who ought to be congratulated that my master has condescended to fall in love with his daughter, and is willing to accept him for his father-in-law? — my master, who has rejected the advances of so many damsels of high degree; my master, for whom over four princesses have committed I know not how many absurdities! But who is here? [*Looking toward the right*] Ah, Columbine! Come in, my beautiful Columbine! Do not be afraid. [COLUMBINE *enters from the right*] We are all your friends, and our mutual friendship will protect you from our mutual admiration.

COLUMBINE. Doña Sirena has sent me for news of your master. It was scarcely day when Silvia came to our house and confided everything that had happened to my mistress. She says that she will never return to her father, nor leave my mistress, unless it is to become the bride of Signor Leander.

CRISPIN. Does she say that? O, noble girl! O, constant, true-hearted lover!

HARLEQUIN. What an epithalamium I shall write for their wedding!

COLUMBINE. Silvia is positive that Leander is wounded. She heard the clash of swords beneath the balcony, your cries for help; then she fell senseless and they found her in a swoon at daybreak. Tell me how Signor Leander is, for she is beside herself with anxiety to hear, and my lady also is much distressed.

CRISPIN. Tell her that my master escaped with his life only through the unutterable power of love. Tell her that he is dying now only from the incurable wounds of love. Tell her that to the last . . . [*Seeing* LEANDER *approach*] Ah, but here he is himself, and he will be able to give you later news than I.

[LEANDER *enters*]

CAPTAIN [*embracing him*]. My dear, good friend!

HARLEQUIN [*embracing him*]. My friend and master!

COLUMBINE. Ah, Signor Leander, what happiness! You are safe!

LEANDER. What? How did you know?

CRISPIN. Nothing else is talked about in the city. People gather in groups in the squares murmuring vengeance and venting imprecations upon Signor Polichinelle.

LEANDER. What is this?

CAPTAIN. He had better not dare attempt your life a second time.

HARLEQUIN. He had better not dare to attempt to arrest the true course of your love.

COLUMBINE. It would be useless. Silvia is in my mistress's house and she swears that she will leave it only to become your bride.

LEANDER. Silvia in your house? But her father . . .

COLUMBINE. Signor Polichinelle has all he can do to look after himself.

CAPTAIN. What? I knew that man would be up to something. Oh, of what base uses money is capable!

HARLEQUIN. It is capable of everything but love; of that it is incapable.

COLUMBINE. He tried to have you assassinated dishonorably in the dark.

CRISPIN. By twelve cutthroats. Twelve! I counted them.

LEANDER. I made out only three or four.

CRISPIN. My master will end by telling you that there was no danger so as not to receive credit for his coolness and his bravery — but I saw it. There were twelve; twelve armed to the teeth, prepared to do murder. It seemed impossible that he could escape with his life.

COLUMBINE. I must run and calm Silvia and my mistress.

CRISPIN. Listen, Columbine. As to

Silvia — wouldn't it be as well, perhaps, not to calm her?

COLUMBINE. Leave that to my mistress. Silvia is convinced that your master is dead, and although Doña Sirena is making the most unheard-of efforts to console her, it will not be long before she is here in spite of the consequences.

CRISPIN. I ought to have known of what your mistress was capable.

CAPTAIN. We must be going, too; there is nothing here that we can do. The point is to arouse the indignation of the people against Signor Polichinelle.

HARLEQUIN. We shall stone his house; we shall raise the whole city. Until to-day not a single man has dared to lift his hand against him; to-day we will all dare to do it together. There is an uplift, a moral earnestness in a crowd.

COLUMBINE. He will come creeping on his knees and beg you to accept his daughter as your wife.

CRISPIN. Yes, yes, he will indeed! Run, friends, run! The life of my master is not secure. A man who has once made up his mind to assassinate him is not likely to be turned aside for a trifle.

CAPTAIN. Have no fear, my good friend.

HARLEQUIN. My friend and master!

COLUMBINE. Signor Leander!

LEANDER. Thanks to you all, my friends. My loyal friends!

[*All go out but* LEANDER *and* CRISPIN]

LEANDER. What is this, Crispin? What are you trying to do? Where do you expect to come out with all your lies? Do you know what I believe? You paid those fellows yourself; it was your idea. I should have got off badly enough among so many if they had been in earnest.

CRISPIN. Have you the temerity to reproach me when I precipitate the fulfilment of your desires so skilfully?

LEANDER. No, Crispin, no. You know you do not. I love Silvia. I am resolved: I shall never win her love through deception, come what may.

CRISPIN. You know very well, then, what will come. Do you call it love to sit down and resign yourself to losing what you love for the sake of these quibbles of conscience? Silvia herself would not thank you for it.

LEANDER. What do you mean? If she once learns who I am . . .

CRISPIN. By the time she finds out you will no longer be the one that you are. You will be her husband then, her beloved husband, who is everything that is noble and faithful and true, and whatever else you like besides, or that her heart desires. Once you are master of her heart — and her fortune — will you not be a complete and perfect gentleman? You will not be like Signor Polichinelle, who, with all his wealth which permits him so many luxuries, has not yet been able to permit himself the luxury of being honest. Deceit is natural to him, but with you it was only necessity. If you had not had me at your side you would have starved to death before this out of pure conscientiousness. Ah! do you suppose that if I had thought for one moment that you were a man of another sort, I would have been satisfied to devote your abilities to love? No, I would have put you into politics, and not merely the fortune of Signor Polichinelle would have been ours, but a chastened and admiring world. But you are not ambitious. You will be satisfied to be happy.

LEANDER. But can't you see that no good, no happiness, can come out of this? If I could lie so as to make her love me and in that way become rich, then it could only be because I did not love. And if I did not love, then how could I be happy? And if I love, how can I lie?

CRISPIN. Don't lie, then. Love, love passionately, entirely, with your whole heart and soul. Put your love before everything else upon earth. Guard and protect it. A lover does not lie when he keeps to himself what he thinks might prejudice the blind affection of his mistress.

LEANDER. These are subtleties, Crispin.

CRISPIN. Which you would have known all about before if you had really been in love. Love is all subtleties and the greatest subtlety of them all is not that lovers deceive others — it is that they can so easily deceive themselves.

LEANDER. I do not deceive myself, Crispin. I am not one of those men who, when they have sold their conscience, think that they have also been able to dispose of their intelligence as well.

CRISPIN. That is the reason I said you would never make a good politician.

You are right. For the intelligence is the conscience of truth, and the man who parts with that among the lies of this life is as one who has lost himself. He is without compass or sail. He will never be able to find himself again, nor know himself, but become in all his being just one more living lie.

LEANDER. Where did you learn all these things, Crispin?

CRISPIN. I meditated a little while in the galleys, where this conscience of my intelligence accused me of having been more of a fool than a knave. If I had had more knavery and less stupidity, instead of rowing I might have commanded the ship. So I swore never again to return to the oar. You can see now what I am willing to do for your sake since I am on the point of breaking my oath.

LEANDER. In what way?

CRISPIN. Our situation has become desperate. We have exhausted our credit, and our dupes begin to demand something more substantial than talk: the innkeeper who entertained us so long with such munificence, expecting that you would receive your remittances; Signor Pantaloon, who, hearing of the credit extended by the innkeeper, advanced us whatever was necessary to install us sumptuously in this house; tradesmen of every description, who did not hesitate to provide us with every luxury, dazzled by such display; Doña Sirena herself, who has lent us her invaluable good offices in your love affair — they have all only asked what was reasonable; it would be unjust to expect more of them or to complain of such delightful people. The name of this fair city shall ever be engraven upon my heart in letters of gold. From this hour I claim it as my adopted mother! But more than this, have you forgotten that they have been searching for us in other parts and following on our heels? Can it be that all those glorious exploits of Mantua and Florence have been forgotten? Don't you recall that famous lawsuit in Bologna? Three thousand two hundred pages of testimony already admitted against us before we withdrew in alarm at the sight of such prodigious expansive ability! Do you imagine that it has not continued to grow under the pen of that learned doctor and jurist, who has taken it under his wing? How many whereases and therefores must there now be therefore, whereas they are all there for no good? Do you still doubt? Do you still hesitate and reprove me because I give the battle to-day which is to decide our fate forever at a single blow?

LEANDER. Let us fly!

CRISPIN. No! Let the despairing fly! This day decides. We challenge fortune. I have given you love; give me life!

LEANDER. But how can we save ourselves? What can I do? Tell me.

CRISPIN. Nothing yet. It will be enough to accept what others offer. We have intertwined ourselves with the interests of many, and the bonds of interest will prove our salvation.

[DOÑA SIRENA *enters*]

SIRENA. Have I your permission, Signor Leander?

LEANDER. Doña Sirena! What? You in my house?

SIRENA. I am conscious of the risk I am running — the gossip of evil tongues. What? Doña Sirena in the house of a young and gallant gentleman?

CRISPIN. My master will know how to avoid all cause of scandal, if any indeed could attach to your name.

SIRENA. Your master? I would not trust him. Men are so boastful! But it is idle to anticipate. What, sir, is this talk about an attempt to kill you last night? I have not heard another thing since I got up in the morning. And Silvia! The poor child! How she loves you! I would give a great deal to know what it was that you did to make her fall in love with you like that.

CRISPIN. My master feels that it was what you did. He owes it all to you.

SIRENA. I should be the last one to deny that he owes me anything. I have always tried to speak well of him — a thing I had no right to do, not knowing him sufficiently. I have gone to great lengths in his service. Now if you are false to your promise . . .

CRISPIN. You do not doubt my master? Have you not the papers signed in his own hand?

SIRENA. The hand is a good one and so is the name. I don't bother about them. I know what it is to trust, and I know that Signor Leander will pay me what he owes. But to-day has been a bitter day for me, and if you could let me have to-day one-half of what you have promised, I would willingly forego the other half.

CRISPIN. To-day, do you say?

SIRENA. A day of tribulation! And what makes it worse, it is twenty years ago to-day that my second husband died, who was my first — yes, my only love.

CRISPIN. May he rest in peace with all the honors of the first!

SIRENA. The first was forced upon me by my father. I never loved him, but in spite of it he insisted upon being faithful to me.

CRISPIN. What knowledge you have of men, Doña Sirena!

SIRENA. But let us leave these recollections, which are depressing, and turn to hope. Would you believe it? Silvia insisted upon coming with me.

LEANDER. Here? To this house?

SIRENA. Where do you suppose it was that she insisted upon coming? What do you say to that? What would Signor Polichinelle say? With all the city roused against him, there would be nothing for him to do but to have you marry.

LEANDER. No, no! Don't let her come. . . .

CRISPIN. Hush! You know my master has a way of not saying what he means.

SIRENA. I know. What would he give to see Silvia at his side, never to be separated from him more?

CRISPIN. What would he give? You don't know what he would give!

SIRENA. That is the reason I ask.

CRISPIN. Ah, Doña Sirena! If my master becomes the husband of Silvia to-day, to-day he will pay you everything that he has promised you.

SIRENA. And if he does not?

CRISPIN. Then you lose everything. Suit yourself.

LEANDER. Silence, Crispin, silence! Enough! I cannot submit to have my love treated as a bargain. Go, Doña Sirena! Say to Silvia that she must return to her father's house, that under no circumstances is she ever to enter mine; that she must forget me forever. I shall fly and hide myself in the desert places of the earth, where no man shall see me, no, nor so much as know my name. My name? I wonder — have I a name?

CRISPIN. Will you be silent?

SIRENA. What is the matter with him? What paroxysm is this? Return to your senses! Come to your proper mind! How? Renounce so glorious an enterprise for nothing? You are not the only person who is to be considered. Remember that there are others who have put their confidence in you. A lady of quality who has exposed herself for your sake is not to be betrayed with impunity. You will do no such thing. You will not be so foolish. You will marry Silvia or there will be one who will find a way to bring you to a reckoning for all your impostures. I am not so defenseless in the world as you may think, Signor Leander.

CRISPIN. Doña Sirena is right. But believe me, this fit of my master's — he is offended by your reproaches, your want of confidence.

SIRENA. I don't want confidence in your master. And I might as well say it — I don't want confidence in Signor Polichinelle. He is not a man to be trifled with, either. After the outcry which you raised against him by your stratagem of last night —

CRISPIN. Stratagem, did you say?

SIRENA. Bah! Everybody knows it. One of the rascals was a relative of mine, and among the others I had connections. Very well, sirs, very well! Signor Polichinelle has not been asleep. It is said in the city that he has given information as to who you are to Justice, and on what grounds you may be apprehended. It is said that a process has arrived to-day from Bologna —

CRISPIN. And a devil of a doctor with it? Three thousand nine hundred folios . . .

SIRENA. So it is said and on good authority. You see that there is no time to lose.

CRISPIN. Who is losing and who is wasting time but you? Return, return at once to your house! Say to Silvia —

SIRENA. Silvia? Silvia is here. She came along with me and Columbine as one of the attendants in my train. She is waiting in the antechamber. I told her that you were wounded horribly.

LEANDER. Oh, my Silvia!

SIRENA. She has reconciled herself to your death. She hopes for nothing else. She expects nothing else. She thinks nothing of what she risks in coming here to see you. Well? Are we friends?

CRISPIN. You are adorable! [*To* LEANDER] Quick! Lie down here. Stretch yourself out in this chair Seem sick, suffer, faint — be downhearted. And remember, if I am not

satisfied with the appearance, I will substitute the reality!

[*Threatening him and forcing him into a chair*]

LEANDER. Yes, I am in your power! I see it, I know it! But Silvia shall never be! Yes, let me see her. Tell her to come in. I shall save her in spite of you, in spite of everything, in spite even of herself!

CRISPIN. You know my master has a way of not meaning what he says.

SIRENA. I never thought him such a fool. Come with me.

[*She goes out with* CRISPIN]

[SILVIA *enters*]

LEANDER. Silvia! My Silvia!

SILVIA. But aren't you wounded?

LEANDER. No, don't you see? It was a lie, another lie to bring you here. But don't be afraid. Your father will come soon; soon you will leave this house with him without having any cause to reproach me. . . . Ah! None but that I have disturbed the serenity of your soul with an illusion of love which will be to you in the future no more than the remembrance of a dark and evil dream!

SILVIA. But Leander? Then your love was not real?

LEANDER. My love was, yes. That is why I could not deceive you. Leave this place at once — before any but those who brought you here discover that you came.

SILVIA. What are you afraid of? Am I not safe in your house? I was not afraid to come. What harm can happen to me at your side?

LEANDER. You are right. None! My love will protect you even from your innocence.

SILVIA. I can never go back to my father's house — not after the horrible thing which he did last night.

LEANDER. No, Silvia, do not blame your father. It was not his fault; it was another deception, another lie. Fly from me; forget this miserable adventurer, this nameless outcast, a fugitive from justice . . .

SILVIA. No, it isn't true. No! It is the conduct of my father which makes me unworthy of your love. That is what it is. I see it all now. I understand. Ay, for me!

LEANDER. Silvia! My Silvia! How cruel your sweet words are! How cruel this noble confidence of your heart, so innocent of evil and of life!

[CRISPIN *enters, running*]

CRISPIN. Master! Master! Signor Polichinelle is coming!

SILVIA. My father!

LEANDER. It doesn't matter. I shall lead you to him with my own hand.

CRISPIN. But he is not coming alone. There is a great crowd with him; the officers of justice . . .

LEANDER. What? Ah! If they should find you here? In my house! [*To* CRISPIN] I see it all now. You have told them. But you shall not succeed in your design!

CRISPIN. I? No. Certainly not! For this time this is in earnest and nothing can save us now.

LEANDER. No, not us. Nor shall I try. But her . . . Yes! Hide her, conceal her! We must secrete her here.

SILVIA. But you?

LEANDER. Have no fear. Quick! They are on the stair. [*He hides* SILVIA *in a room at the rear, meanwhile saying to* CRISPIN] See what these fellows want. On your life let no man set his foot within this room after I am gone! . . . The game is up! It is the end for me.

[*He runs to the window*]

CRISPIN [*holding him back*]. Master! Master! Hold! Control yourself. Come to your senses. Don't throw your life away!

LEANDER. I am not throwing my life away . . . There is no escape . . . I am saving her. . . .

[*He climbs through the window and rapidly up outside and disappears*]

CRISPIN. Master! Master! H'm! Not so bad after all. I thought he was going to dash himself to pieces on the ground. Instead he has climbed higher. . . . There is hope yet — he may yet learn to fly. It is his region, the clouds. . . . Now I to mine, the firm ground. And more need than ever that I should make certain that it is solid beneath my feet.

[*He seats himself complacently in an armchair*]

POLICHINELLE [*without, to those who are with him*]. Guard the doors! Let no man escape! No, nor woman either. . . . Nor dog nor cat!

INNKEEPER. Where are they? Where are these bandits? These assassins?

PANTALOON. Justice! Justice! My money! My money!

[SIGNOR POLICHINELLE, *the* INNKEEPER, SIGNOR PANTALOON, *the* CAPTAIN, HARLEQUIN, *the* DOCTOR, *the* SECRETARY, *and two* CONSTABLES *enter, bearing in their arms enormous scrolls and protocols, or papers of the suit. All enter from the right in the order named. The* DOCTOR *and the* SECRETARY *pass at once to the table and prepare to take testimony. Such rolls and papers as cannot be accommodated upon the table the two* CONSTABLES *retain in their hands, remaining standing for that purpose at the rear*]

CAPTAIN. But can this be possible, Crispin?

HARLEQUIN. Is it possible that such a thing can be?

PANTALOON. Justice! Justice! My money! My money!

INNKEEPER. Seize them! Put them in irons!

PANTALOON. Don't let them escape! Don't let them escape!

CRISPIN. What? How is this? Who dares to desecrate with impious clamor the house of a gentleman and a cavalier? Oh, you may congratulate yourselves that my master is not at home!

PANTALOON. Silence! Silence! For you are his accomplice and you will be held to answer to the same reckoning as he.

INNKEEPER. Accomplice, did you say? As guilty as his pretended master! — for he was the one who deceived me.

CAPTAIN. What is the meaning of this, Crispin?

HARLEQUIN. Is there any truth in what these people say?

POLICHINELLE. What have you to say for yourself now, Crispin? You thought you were a clever rogue to cut up your capers with me. I tried to murder your master, did I? I am an old miser who is battening on his daughter's heart? All the city is stirred up against me, is it, heaping me with insults? Well, we shall see.

PANTALOON. Leave him to us, Signor Polichinelle, for this is our affair. After all, you have lost nothing. But I — all my wealth which I lent him without security. I am ruined for the rest of my life. What will become of me?

INNKEEPER. What will become of me, tell me that, when I spent what I never had and even ran into debt so that he might be served — as I thought — in a manner befitting his station? It was my destruction, my ruin.

CAPTAIN. We too were horribly deceived. What will be said of me when it is known that I have put my sword at the disposition of an adventurer?

HARLEQUIN. And of me, when I have dedicated sonnet after sonnet to his praise, just as if he had been any ordinary gentleman?

POLICHINELLE. Ha! Ha! Ha!

PANTALOON. Yes, laugh, laugh, that is right. You have lost nothing.

INNKEEPER. Nobody robbed you.

PANTALOON. To work! To work! Where is the other villain?

INNKEEPER. Better see what there is in the house first.

CRISPIN. Slowly, slowly, gentlemen. If you advance one other step —

[*Threatening them with his sword*]

PANTALOON. What? You threaten us? Again? Is such a thing to be endured? Justice! Justice!

INNKEEPER. Yes, justice!

DOCTOR. Gentlemen, unless you listen to me we shall get nowhere. No man may take justice into his own hands, inasmuch as justice is not haste nor oppression nor vengeance nor act of malice. *Summum jus, summum injuria;* the more wrong, the more justice. Justice is all wisdom, and wisdom is all order, and order is all reason, and reason is all procedure, and procedure is all logic. Barbara, Celarent, Darii, Ferio, Baralipton, deposit all your wrongs and all your disputations with me, for if they are to be of any validity they must all form a part of this process which I have brought in these protocols with me.

CRISPIN. The devil, you say! Hasn't it grown enough already?

DOCTOR. Herein are set down and inscribed divers other offenses of these defendants, whereunto must be added and conjoined each and every one of those of which you may accuse them now. And I must be the advocate in all of them, for that is the only way in which it will be possible for you to obtain satisfaction and justice. Write, Signor Secretary, and let the said complainants depose.

PANTALOON. It might be better to settle our differences among ourselves. You know what justice is.

INNKEEPER. Write nothing. It will only be making the white black, and in the end we shall be left without our money and these rogues without punishment.

PANTALOON. Exactly. My money! My money! And justice afterward.

DOCTOR. You unlearned, you uncivil, you ignorant generation! What do you know of justice? It is not enough for you to say that you have suffered a wrong, unless there be plainly apparent therein an intention to make you suffer that wrong; that is to say, fraud or deceit, which are not the same, although they are confounded in the popular acceptation. But I say unto you that only in the single case —

PANTALOON. Enough! Enough! You will end by telling us that we are the guilty ones.

DOCTOR. What else am I to think when you persist in denying such a plain and obvious fact?

INNKEEPER. I like that. Good! We were robbed. Do you want any plainer or more obvious fact?

DOCTOR. Know, then, that robbery is not the same as theft, much less is it the same as fraud or deceit, which again are not the same as aforesaid. From the laws of the Twelve Tables down to Justinian, to Tribonian, to Emilian, to Triberian . . .

PANTALOON. We shall be cheated out of our money. There is no one who can reason me out of that.

POLICHINELLE. The Signor Doctor is right. We can safely leave the matter to him and everything will be attended to in the process.

DOCTOR. Then write, Signor Secretary, write.

CRISPIN. Will any one listen to me?

PANTALOON. No one, no one. Let that rascal be quiet! Silence for that villain!

INNKEEPER. You will have a chance to talk soon enough when you don't want to.

DOCTOR. He will speak at the proper moment, for justice requires that everybody should be afforded an opportunity to talk. Write, write: In the city of . . . in the matter of . . . But it would certainly not be amiss if we proceeded first to an inventory of whatever there is in the house.

CRISPIN [*before the door*]. It certainly would be a miss . . .

DOCTOR. Thence to progress to the deposit of security on the part of the complainants, so that there may be no question as to their good faith when they assert that they have suffered a loss. Two thousand crowns will be sufficient from each of you, to be secured by guarantees upon all your goods and chattels.

PANTALOON. What is that? Two thousand crowns from us?

DOCTOR. I ought to make it eight; however, as you are persons of responsibility, I take that fact into account. I allow nothing to escape me.

INNKEEPER. Hold! And write no more! We cannot submit to this.

DOCTOR. What? Do you threaten justice? Open a separate process for battery and the hand of violence raised against an officer of the law in full performance of his duties.

PANTALOON. This man will be the ruin of us.

INNKEEPER. He is mad.

DOCTOR. What? Do you call me a man and mad? Speak with more respect. Write! Write! Open two more counts. There was also an assault by word of mouth. . . .

CRISPIN. Now see what you have done through not listening to me.

PANTALOON. Talk, talk, for heaven's sake! Talk! Anything would be better than what is happening to us now.

CRISPIN. Then shut off this fellow, for the love of mercy! He is raising up a mountain with his protocols.

PANTALOON. Stop! Stop, I say!

INNKEEPER. Put down that pen!

DOCTOR. Let no man dare to raise his hand.

CRISPIN. Signor Captain, then lend us your sword. It also is the instrument of justice.

CAPTAIN [*going up to the table and delivering a tremendous blow with his sword upon the papers on which the* DOCTOR *is engaged*]. Have the kindness to desist.

DOCTOR. You see how ready I am to comply with a reasonable request. Suspend the actions. [*They stop writing*] There is a previous question to be adjudged. The parties dispute among themselves. Nevertheless it will be proper to proceed with the inventory . . .

PANTALOON. No! No!

DOCTOR. It is a formality which cannot be waived.

CRISPIN. I don't think it would be proper. When the proper time comes you can write as much as you like. But let me have permission first to speak for a moment with these honorable gentlemen.

DOCTOR. If you wish to have what you are about to say recorded as testimony . . .

CRISPIN. No! By no means. Not a single word, or I shall not open my mouth.

CAPTAIN. Better let the fellow talk.

CRISPIN. What shall I say? What are you complaining about? That you have lost your money? What do you want? To get it back?

PANTALOON. Exactly! Exactly! My money!

INNKEEPER. Our money!

CRISPIN. Then listen to me. Where do you suppose that it is coming from when you insist upon destroying the credit of my master in this fashion, and so make his marriage with the daughter of Signor Polichinelle impossible? Name of Mars! I had rather deal with a thousand knaves than one fool. See what you have done now and how you will be obliged to compound with justice for a half share of what we owe you — I say *owe* you. How will you be any better off if you succeed in sending us to the galleys or to some worse place? Will it put money in your pockets to collect the welts on our skins? Will you be richer or nobler or more powerful because we are ruined? On the other hand, if you had not interrupted us at such an inopportune moment, to-day, this very day, you would have received your money with interest, which God knows is enough to send you all to hang on the gallows to remain suspended forever, if justice were not in these hands — and these pens. Now do as you see fit; I have told you what you ought to do.

DOCTOR. They will remain suspended until further notice.

CAPTAIN. I would never have believed it possible that their crimes could have been so great.

POLICHINELLE. That Crispin . . . He will be capable of convincing them.

PANTALOON [*to the* INNKEEPER]. What do you think of this? Looking at it calmly . . .

INNKEEPER. What do you think?

PANTALOON. You say that your master was to have married the daughter of Signor Polichinelle to-day? But suppose he refuses to give his consent?

CRISPIN. What good would that do him? His daughter has run away with my master. All the world will soon know it. It is more important to him than it is to any one else not to have it known that his daughter has thrown herself away upon a rapscallion, a man without character, a fugitive from justice.

PANTALOON. Suppose this should turn out to be true? What do you think?

INNKEEPER. Better not weaken. The rogue breathes deceit. He is a master.

PANTALOON. You are right. No one can tell how far to believe him. Justice! Justice!

CRISPIN. I warn you — you lose everything!

PANTALOON. Wait! . . . just a moment. We will see. A word with you, Signor Polichinelle.

POLICHINELLE. What do you want with me?

PANTALOON. Suppose that we had made a mistake in this complaint. Suppose that Signor Leander should turn out to be, after all, a noble, virtuous gentleman, incapable of the slightest dishonest thought . . .

POLICHINELLE. What is that? Say that again.

PANTALOON. Suppose that your daughter was in love with him madly, passionately, even to the point where she had run away with him from your house?

POLICHINELLE. My daughter run away from my house with that man. Who says so? Show me the villain! Where is he?

PANTALOON. Don't get excited. It is only in supposition.

POLICHINELLE. Well, sir, I shall not tolerate it even in supposition.

PANTALOON. Try to listen more calmly. Suppose all this should have happened. Wouldn't the best thing for you to do be to let them marry?

POLICHINELLE. Marry? I would see them dead first. But it is useless to consider it. I see what you want. You are scheming to recoup yourselves at my expense, you are such rogues yourselves. But it shall not be! It shall not be!

PANTALOON. Take care! We had better not talk about rogues while you are present.

INNKEEPER. Hear! Hear!

POLICHINELLE. Rogues, rogues! — conspiring to impoverish me. But it shall not be! It shall not be!

DOCTOR. Have no fear, Signor Polichinelle. Even though they should be dissuaded and abandon their design, do you suppose that this process will amount to nothing? Do you imagine that one line of what is written in it can ever be blotted out, though two and fifty crimes be alleged therein and proved against them, besides as many more which require no proof?

PANTALOON. What do you say now, Crispin?

CRISPIN. That though all those crimes were proved three times and those that require no proof yet three times more than the others, you would still be losing your money and wasting your time, for we cannot pay what we do not have.

DOCTOR. Not at all. That is not good law. For I have to be paid, whatever happens.

CRISPIN. Then the complainants will have to pay you. We shall have more than we can do to pay our offenses with our backs.

DOCTOR. The rights of justice are inviolable, and the first of them is to attach in its interest whatever there is in this house.

PANTALOON. But what good will that do us? How shall we get anything?

INNKEEPER. Of course not! Don't you see?

DOCTOR. Write, write, for if we were to talk forever we should never arrive at a conclusion which would be more satisfactory.

PANTALOON AND INNKEEPER. No! No! Not a word! Not a word!

CRISPIN. Hear me, first, Signor Doctor! In your ear . . . Suppose you were to be paid at once, on the spot and without the trouble of all this writing, your . . . what is it that you call them? — crumbs of justice?

DOCTOR. Perquisites of the law.

CRISPIN. Have it your own way. What would you say to that?

DOCTOR. Why, in that case . . .

CRISPIN. Listen: — my master will be rich to-day, influential, if Signor Polichinelle consents to his marrying his daughter. Remember that the young lady is the only child of Signor Polichinelle; remember that my master will be master indeed not only of her . . . Remember . . .

DOCTOR. H'm! It certainly does deserve to be remembered.

PANTALOON [*to* CRISPIN]. What does he say?

INNKEEPER. What are you going to do?

DOCTOR. Let me consider. That fellow clearly is not thick-witted. It is easy to see that he is acquainted with legal precedent. For if we remember that the wrong which has been done was purely a pecuniary one, and that every wrong which can be redressed in kind suffers in the reparation the most fitting punishment; if we reflect that in the barbaric and primitive law of vengeance it was written: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but not a tooth for an eye nor an eye for a tooth, so in the present instance it might be argued a crown for a crown and money for money. He has not taken your lives. Why not? The fact is evidence that he did not wish you to take his in return. He has not insulted your persons, impugned your honor, your reputations. Why not? Plainly because he was not willing to submit to a like indignity from you. Equity is the supremest justice. *Equitas justiciam magna est.* And from the Pandects to Tribonian, including Emilianus Tribonianus . . .

PANTALOON. Include him. So long as we get our money . . .

INNKEEPER. So long as he pays us . . .

POLICHINELLE. What is this nonsense? How can he pay? What is the use of all this talk?

CRISPIN. A great deal of use. As I was saying, you are all deeply interested in saving my master, in saving both of us, for your own advantage, for the common good of all. You, so as not to lose your money; the Signor Doctor so as not to see all this vast store of doctrine go for nothing, which he is heaping up in those sarcophagi of learning; the Signor Captain because everybody knows that he was the friend of my master, and it would not be creditable to his valor to have it said that he had been the dupe of an adventurer; you, Signor Harlequin, because your poetic dithyrambs would lose all their merit as soon as it became known with what little sense you composed them; you, Signor Polichinelle, my dear old friend, because your daughter is now, in the

sight of God and before man, Signor Leander's wife.

POLICHINELLE. You lie! You lie! Impudent rascal! Cutthroat!

CRISPIN. I think then that we had better proceed with the inventory of what there is in the house. Write, write, and let all these gentlemen be our witnesses. We can begin with this apartment.

[*He throws back the tapestry from the door at the rear, and* SILVIA, LEANDER, DOÑA SIRENA, COLUMBINE, *and the* WIFE OF POLICHINELLE *appear, forming a group*]

PANTALOON AND THE INNKEEPER. Silvia!

CAPTAIN AND HARLEQUIN. Together! Both of them!

POLICHINELLE. Is it possible? What? Are they all against me? My wife and daughter, too? All, all, for my ruin? Seize that man, these women, this impostor, or I with my own hand . . .

PANTALOON. Signor Polichinelle, are you out of your head?

LEANDER [*advancing toward the proscenium, accompanied by the others*]. Your daughter came to my house under the protection of Doña Sirena, believing that I was wounded; and I ran immediately in search of your wife, so that she too might be present with her and protect her. Silvia knows who I am, she knows the whole story of my life of misery and wandering, of cheats and deceptions and lies — how it has been utterly vile; and I am sure that no vestige of our dream of love any longer remains in her heart. Take her away from this place, take her away! That is my only request before I deliver myself up into the hands of justice.

POLICHINELLE. The punishment of my daughter shall be my affair, but as for this villain . . . Seize him, I say!

SILVIA. Father! If you do not save him it will be my death. I love him, I shall love him always; I love him now more than I ever did, because his heart is noble. He has been cruelly unfortunate; and he might have made me his by a lie — but he would not lie.

POLICHINELLE. Silence! Silence, foolish, unhappy girl! This is the result of the bringing up of your mother, of her vanity, her hallucinations, of all your romantic reading, your music to the light of the moon.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Anything would be preferable to having my daughter marry a man like you, to be unhappy afterward all the rest of her life, like her mother. Of what use are my riches to me?

SIRENA. You are right, Signora Polichinelle. Of what use are riches without love?

COLUMBINE. The same use as love without riches.

DOCTOR. Signor Polichinelle, under the circumstances, the only thing for you to do is to let them marry.

PANTALOON. Or there will be a scandal in the city.

INNKEEPER. And everybody will be on his side.

CAPTAIN. And we can never consent to have you use force against your daughter.

DOCTOR. It will have to stand in the process that they were surprised here together.

CRISPIN. And after all, the only trouble with my master was that he had no money; no one could outdo him in nobility of character; your grandchildren will be gentlemen — even if that quality does not extend up to the grandfather.

ALL. Let them marry! Let them marry!

PANTALOON. Or we will all turn upon you.

INNKEEPER. And your history will be brought to light — the secret story of your life . . .

HARLEQUIN. And you will gain nothing by that.

SIRENA. A lady begs it of you on her knees, moved to tears by the spectacle of a love so unusual in these days.

COLUMBINE. Which seems more like love in a story.

ALL. Let them marry! Let them marry!

POLICHINELLE. Yes! let them marry in an evil hour. My daughter shall be cut off without dowry and without inheritance. I will ruin my estate rather than that this reprobate . . .

DOCTOR. You certainly will not do anything of the kind, Signor Polichinelle.

PANTALOON. Who ever heard of such nonsense?

INNKEEPER. I shouldn't think of it for a moment.

HARLEQUIN. What would people say?

CAPTAIN. We could never consent to it.

SILVIA. No, my dear father, I am the one who cannot accept anything. I am the one who must share the poverty of his fate. I love him so.

LEANDER. That is the only condition upon which I can accept your love.

[*All run toward* SILVIA *and* LEANDER]

DOCTOR. What do you say? Are you crazy?

PANTALOON. Preposterous! Absurd!

INNKEEPER. You are going to accept everything.

HARLEQUIN. You will be happy and you will be rich.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. What? My daughter in poverty? Is this wretch the hangman?

SIRENA. Remember that love is a delicate babe and able to endure but few privations.

DOCTOR. It is clearly illegal. Signor Polichinelle, you will sign a munificent donation immediately as befits a person of your dignity and importance, who is a kind and loving father. Write, write, Signor Secretary, for this is something to which nobody will object.

ALL [*except* POLICHINELLE]. Write! Write!

DOCTOR. And you, my dear, my innocent young lovers, resign yourselves to riches. You have no right to carry your prejudices to an extreme at which they become offensive to others.

PANTALOON [*to* CRISPIN]. Now will you pay us?

CRISPIN. Do you doubt it? But you will have to swear first that Signor Leander never owed you anything. See how he is sacrificing himself upon your account, accepting this money which is repugnant to him.

PANTALOON. We always knew that he was a perfect gentleman.

INNKEEPER. Always.

HARLEQUIN. We all believed it.

CAPTAIN. And we shall continue to maintain our belief.

CRISPIN. Now, Doctor, this process . . . Do you suppose there is waste space enough anywhere in the world for it to be thrown away upon?

DOCTOR. My foresight has provided for everything. All that will be necessary is to change the punctuation. For example, here where it says: "Whereas I depose and declare, not without due sanction of law" . . . take out the comma and it reads: "Whereas I depose and declare not without due sanction of law." And here: "Wherefore he is not without due judgment condemned". . . put in a comma and it reads: "Wherefore he is not, without due judgment condemned" . . .

CRISPIN. O excellent comma! O wonderful, O marvellous comma! Stupendous Genius and Miracle of Justice! Oracle of the Law! Thou Monster of Jurisprudence!

DOCTOR. Now I can rely upon the generosity of your master.

CRISPIN. You can. Nobody knows better than you do how money will change a man.

SECRETARY. I was the one who put in and took out the commas.

CRISPIN. While you are waiting for something better, pray accept this chain. It is of gold.

SECRETARY. H'm! How many carats fine?

CRISPIN. You ought to know. You understand commas and carats.

POLICHINELLE. I impose only one condition: — that this rogue leave your service forever.

CRISPIN. That will not be necessary, Signor Polichinelle. Do you suppose that I am so poor in ambition as my master?

LEANDER. What? You are not going to leave me, Crispin? It will not be without sorrow on my part.

CRISPIN. It will not last long. I can be of no further use to you. With me you will be able to lay aside your lion's skin and your old man's wisdom. What did I tell you, sir? Between them all we were sure to be saved. And believe me now, when you are getting on in the world, the ties of love are as nothing to the bonds of interest.

LEANDER. You are wrong. For without the love of Silvia I should never have been saved.

CRISPIN. And is love a slight interest? I have always given due credit to the ideal and I count upon it always. With this the farce ends.

SILVIA [*to the audience*]. You have seen in it how these puppets have been moved by plain and obvious strings, like men and women in the farces of our lives — strings which were their interests, their passions, and all the illusions and petty miseries of their state. Some are pulled by the feet to lives of restless and weary wandering;

some by the hands, to toil with pain, to struggle with bitterness, to strike with cunning, to slay with violence and rage. But into the hearts of all there descends sometimes from heaven an invisible thread, as if it were woven out of the sunlight and the moonbeams, the invisible thread of love, which makes these men and women, as it does these puppets which seem like men, almost divine, and brings to our foreheads the smile and splendors of the dawn, lends wings to our drooping spirits, and whispers to us still that this farce is not all a farce, that there is something noble, something divine in our lives which is true and which is eternal, and which shall not close when the farce of life shall close.

THE END

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

(*1897*)

By Edmond Rostand

EDMOND ROSTAND AND "CYRANO DE BERGERAC"

Edmond Rostand's plays are the librettos for the high music of his own words. One has to hear the flow of his French in order to have the blood move to the rhythm of his verse. Memory conjures the golden quality of Bernhardt's utterance, the vibrant depths of Coquelin's reading. Rostand suffers through translation; all French literature does, in fact. But his poetry and romantic spirit can never be lost, if the translator ever so faintly follows the original in an effort to preserve in English a metre and rhyme which will be closely akin to the French. And to the average reader in America, Rostand has to be read in English, for his French — vibrant with terse expression, with colloquial twists and turns, with poetic licenses and old form tricks — is not easy to the uninitiated, however much it may be a joy to the fluent reader of French. I defy any but an adept to reach quickly the meaning in the subtle play on words which radiates through "Chanticler." Yet a comparison of "Cyrano de Bergerac", in the translations of Gertrude Hall, Howard Thayer Kingsbury, or Mrs. Henderson Daingerfield Norman — however well they are done — with the original French, reveals an effort to eke out the richness of the French with English phrases which fill the lines without adding to or enlightening the thought. In other words, the ingenuity of the translator always seems to encroach.

It is not derogatory to speak of Rostand's plays as glorified librettos to the music of his poetic speech. When he comes to his romantic outbursts, he does not seem to halt the progress of his effective drama; the artistry in him sends the rush of poetic imagination and fervor into his great speeches, and gives them no pronounced appearance of being "set." They afford the actor opportunity, in a grandly elocutionary and romantic way. Hence they are not fit for revival unless an actor can be found who possesses the manner, the style of acting which, during the past decade, have been so belittled by the realistic school. For Rostand's characters are of a certain mold; the nose of Cyrano would in itself be comical, were there not residing in the cloak and shoes and plumed hat of this tender braggart the heroic dash of a Coquelin, or the peculiarly metallic fervor of a Richard Mansfield. When Maude Adams gave "L'Aiglon", in the Louis N. Parker translation, she was adequate in those delicate parts in which Bernhardt lacked delicacy; she was thin in such moments as the moving mysticism of the battle scene; and feminine rather than boyish in the great situation before the mirror, where the lad utters the flow of words in the "But" speech, so overpoweringly and movingly carried by the divine Sarah.

Inadequacy of portrayal in Rostand's plays only measures the opportunities missed; it does not destroy the play itself. Because Miss Adams — due to managerial methods of publicity and the habit theatrically of playing safe, which has marked the American theatre for so many years — did not fill the gay feathers of

"Chanticler", was no reason why the play should have been lost to the stage since its rather inadequate production. It is said that when "L'Aiglon" was first given in Paris, national poetic fervor ran high through the audience. We lost that in America; it was but impersonally historical to us, though distinctly dramatic and eminently picturesque. When "Chanticler" was given — apart from the curiosity of seeing a popular actress in feathers — there was a depth to the symbol of France, and to the moral of man's indomitable creativeness, which the French actor, Guitry, must have reached, but which failed to have cumulative effectiveness in the American production, despite all the gay millinery.

Such thoughts as the foregoing came to me when I carefully examined the most recent translation of Rostand by Mrs. Henderson Daingerfield Norman. I found myself renewing past pleasures, after many seasons in the theatre of stark realism. Is the style of Rostand gone from our boards, however much we may pleasure over the music of his words as dramatic poet? Have we outgrown the embroideries of "The Princess Far-away", as we have outgrown the painter's style in Rossetti? For it is strange that we still preach the delicate mysticism of "Pelléas and Mélisande" as modern, while we seem to deprecate Rostand's play, so nearly akin, and so equally significant in its spiritual note.

It may be that Maeterlinck — still alive — is identified with an insurgency in the theatre which is now more alive than ever; while Rostand, dead, has taken his place in the historical development of a romanticism renaissant, but not quite sure of itself. Yet I think that the test of all live literature — dramatic as well as for the library — is whether or not it stirs the blood. There are speeches in "Cyrano de Bergerac" that lift one with patriotic, romantic fervor; there are outbursts in "Chanticler", like the "Hymn to the Rising Sun" in "Le Coq d'Or." And I believe the spirit of the theatregoer, in all climes, thirsts for just such brilliancy, just such emotion.

As a workman Rostand never rushed; his productiveness was amazingly slow, and his strength of resistance to plaudit and commercial temptation excellent. For that reason, curiosity and expectancy brought him publicity at all times. Cables hummed from Paris to New York each added phrase or scene, as Rostand polished a new play and neared its end. Managers rushed across seas to bid for the rights, and to see the French production. Readers sent their orders to the bookstalls way in advance of the publication of the French edition of each piece. And they always found worthwhile surprises; poetry was there in abundance, and rôles fit for special actors — for Rostand was furthered by Bernhardt, Coquelin, and Guitry. He wrote other plays than those by which his fame was established. It was always to me a red-letter day in the theatre to go to a new Rostand play. When will such times continue in full force — not return, as the retroactive would say — and the arch-enemies of romanticism! For romanticism must continue — profiting by the new psychology and slipping the old outward fustian. And there must be encouraged the romantic actors to give largeness to gesture and emotion which the romantic drama demands, in order that the heart may be stirred to the same intensity that the intellect has been. Rostand made live again what the Théâtre Libre rejected. Will Rostand die in the theatre? Not with such librettos to such music!

Edmond Rostand was born April 1, 1868, at Marseilles. He was educated in his native town, and went to Paris, where he entered the Collège Stanislas. He

then studied law. In 1890, he began his literary career with the publication of a volume of poetry, "Les Musardises." Bibliographies show that he began even earlier, in 1888, with "Le Gant Rouge", and that his first dramatic attempt was an unproduced one-act verse play, "Les deux Pierrots." In the order of their writing, Rostand's dramatic career embraced "Les Romanesques" (Comédie-Française, May 21, 1894), "La Princesse Lointaine" (Théâtre de la Renaissance, April 5, 1895), "La Samaritaine" (Théâtre de la Renaissance, April 14, 1897), "Cyrano de Bergerac" (Le Théâtre de la Porte St.-Martin, December 28, 1897), "L'Aiglon" (Le Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt, March 15, 1900), "Chanticler" (Le Théâtre de la Porte St.-Martin, February 7, 1910). His other literary activity may be traced in the very succinct biography by Louis Haugmard. On June 4, 1903, he read a paper before the Académie Française. Rostand's death occurred on December 2, 1918.[1]

[1] Mr. Walter Hampden appeared in "Cyrano de Bergerac", at the National Theatre, New York, on Thursday evening, November 1, 1923. A new English version of the play was prepared for him by Mr. Brian Hooker. The performance was one of great distinction, marked by a beauty of scene and a spirited comprehension of the volatile psychology of the braggart. The translation used (and published, Henry Holt & Co., 1923) has great merit. It will be remembered that the play was but infrequently given by Mr. Mansfield, after the decision rendered, when one Charles E. Gross claimed that Rostand was a plagiarist, and demanded not only accrued royalties but an injunction against further performances of the play until such royalties were agreed on. The famous decision of the Illinois judge was that Mr. Mansfield should deliver to the said Gross one hundred dollars for each performance of "Cyrano de Bergerac", thus sanctioning the charge that Rostand was a plagiarist! This was in January, 1899, while Mr. Mansfield was in Chicago.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

By EDMOND ROSTAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY GERTRUDE HALL

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Cyrano de Bergerac
Christian de Neuvillette
Comte de Guiche
Ragueneau
Le Bret
Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux
Lignière
De Valvert
Montfleury
Bellerose
Jodelet
Cuigy
Brissaille
A Bore
A Mousquetaire
Other Mousquetaire
A Spanish Officer
A Light-Cavalry Man
A Doorkeeper
A Burgher
His Son
A Pickpocket
A Spectator
A Watchman
Bertrandou the Fifer
A Capucin
Two Musicians
Seven Cadets
Three Marquises
Poets
Pastrycooks

Roxane
Sister Martha
Lise
The Sweetmeat Vender
Mother Margaret
The Duenna
Sister Claire
An Actress
A Soubrette
A Flower-Girl
Pages

The crowd, bourgeois, marquises, mousquetaires, pickpockets, pastrycooks, poets, Gascony Cadets, players, fiddlers, pages, children, Spanish soldiers, spectators, précieuses, actresses, bourgeoises, nuns, etc.

Copyright, 1898,
By DOUBLEDAY & McCLURE CO.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

ACT I

A Play at the Hotel de Bourgogne

The great hall of the Hotel de Bourgogne, in 1640. A sort of tennis-court arranged and decorated for theatrical performances.

The hall is a long rectangle, seen obliquely, so that one side of it constitutes the background, which runs from the position of the front wing at the right, to the line of the furthest wing at the left, and forms an angle with the stage, which is equally seen obliquely.

This stage is furnished, on both sides, along the wings, with benches. The drop-curtain is composed of two tapestry hangings, which can be drawn apart. Above a Harlequin cloak, the royal escutcheon. Broad steps lead from the raised platform of the stage into the house. On either side of these steps, the musicians' seats. A row of candles fills the office of footlights.

Two galleries run along the side; the lower one is divided into boxes. No seats in the pit, which is the stage proper. At the back of the pit, that is to say, at the right, in the front, a few seats raised like steps, one above the other; and, under a stairway which leads to the upper seats, and of which the lower end only is visible, a stand decked with small candelabra, jars full of flowers, flagons and glasses, dishes heaped with sweetmeats, etc.

In the centre of the background, under the box-tier, the entrance to the theatre, large door which half opens to let in the spectators. On the panels of this door, and in several corners, and above the sweetmeat stand, red playbills announcing La Clorise.

At the rise of the curtain, the house is nearly dark, and still empty. The chandeliers are let down in the middle of the pit, until time to light them.

The audience, arriving gradually. Cavaliers, burghers, lackeys, pages, the fiddlers, etc.

A tumult of voices is heard beyond the door; enter brusquely a Cavalier.

Doorkeeper [*running in after him*]. Not so fast! Your fifteen pence!

Cavalier. I come in admission free!

Doorkeeper. And why?

Cavalier. I belong to the king's light cavalry!

Doorkeeper [*to another* Cavalier *who has entered*]. You?

Second Cavalier. I do not pay!

Doorkeeper. But . . .

Second Cavalier. I belong to the mousquetaires!

First Cavalier [*to the* Second]. It does not begin before two. The floor is empty. Let us have a bout with foils.

[*They fence with foils they have brought*]

A Lackey [*entering*]. Pst! . . . Flanquin!

Other Lackey [*arrived a moment before*]. Champagne? . . .

First Lackey [*taking a pack of cards from his doublet and showing it to* Second Lackey]. Cards. Dice. [*Sits down on the floor*]. Let us have a game.

Second Lackey [*sitting down likewise*]. You rascal, willingly!

First Lackey [*taking from his pocket a bit of candle which he lights and sticks on the floor*]. I prigged an eyeful of my master's light!

One of the Watch [*to a flower-girl, who comes forward*]. It is pleasant getting here before the lights. [*Puts his arm around her waist*]

One of the Fencers [*taking a thrust*]. Hit!

One of the Gamblers. Clubs!

THE WATCHMAN [*pursuing the girl*]. A kiss!

THE FLOWER-GIRL [*repulsing him*]. We shall be seen!

THE WATCHMAN [*drawing her into a dark corner*]. No, we shall not!

A MAN [*sitting down on the floor with others who have brought provisions*]. By coming early, you get a comfortable chance to eat.

A BURGHER [*leading his son*]. This should be a good place, my boy. Let us stay here.

ONE OF THE GAMBLERS. Ace wins!

A MAN [*taking a bottle from under his cloak and sitting down*]. A proper toper, toping Burgundy, [*drinks*] I say should tope it in Burgundy House!

THE BURGHER [*to his son*]. Might one not suppose we had stumbled into some house of evil fame? [*Points with his cane at the drunkards*] Guzzlers! . . . [*In breaking guard one of the fencers jostles him*] Brawlers! . . . [*He falls between the gamblers*] Gamesters! . . .

THE WATCHMAN [*behind him, still teasing the flower-girl*]. A kiss!

THE BURGHER [*dragging his son precipitately away*]. Bless my soul! . . . And to reflect that in this very house, my son, were given the plays of the great Rotrou!

THE YOUTH. And those of the great Corneille!

[*A band of* PAGES *holding hands rush in performing a farandole and singing*]

PAGES. Tra la la la la la la la! . . .

DOORKEEPER [*severely to the* PAGES]. Look, now! . . . you pages, you! none of your tricks!

FIRST PAGE [*with wounded dignity*]. Sir! . . . this want of confidence . . . [*As soon as the* DOORKEEPER *has turned away, briskly to the* SECOND PAGE] Have you a string about you?

SECOND PAGE. With a fish-hook at the end!

FIRST PAGE. We will sit up there and angle for wigs!

A PICKPOCKET [*surrounded by a number of individuals of dubious appearance*]. Come, now, my little hopefuls, and learn your A B C's of trade. Being as you're not used to hooking . . .

SECOND PAGE [*shouting to other* PAGES *who have already taken seats in the upper gallery*]. Ho! . . . Did you bring any pea-shooters?

THIRD PAGE [*from above*]. Yes! . . . And pease! . . . [*shoots down a volley of pease*]

THE YOUTH [*to his father*]. What are we going to see?

THE BURGHER. Clorise.

THE YOUTH. By whom?

THE BURGHER. By Balthazar Baro. Ah, what a play it is! . . . [*Goes toward the back on his son's arm*]

PICKPOCKET [*to his disciples*]. Particularly the canonical gentlemen's lace, . . . you're to snip off carefully!

A SPECTATOR [*to another, pointing toward an upper seat*]. Look! On the first night of the Cid, I was perched up there!

PICKPOCKET [*with pantomimic suggestion of spiriting away*]. Watches . . .

THE BURGHER [*coming forward again with his son*]. The actors you are about to see, my son, are among the most illustrious . . .

PICKPOCKET [*with show of subtracting with furtive little tugs*]. Pocket-handkerchiefs . . .

THE BURGHER. Montfleury . . .

SOMEBODY [*shouting from the upper gallery*]. Make haste, and light the chandeliers!

THE BURGHER. Bellerose, l'Épy, the Beaupré, Jodelet . . .

A PAGE [*in the pit*]. Ah! . . . Here comes the goody-seller!

THE SWEETMEAT VENDER [*appearing behind the stand*]. Oranges . . . Milk . . . Raspberry cordial . . . citron-wine . . . [*Hubbub at the door*]

FALSETTO VOICE [*outside*]. Make room, ruffians!

ONE OF THE LACKEYS [*astonished*]. The marquises . . . in the pit!

OTHER LACKEY. Oh, for an instant only!

[*Enter a band of foppish* YOUNG MARQUISES]

ONE OF THE MARQUISES [*looking around the half-empty house*]. What? . . . We happen in like so many linen-drapers? Without disturbing anybody? treading on any feet? . . . Too bad! too bad! too bad! [*He finds himself near several other gentlemen, come in a moment before*] Cuigy, Brissaille! [*Effusive embraces*]

CUIGY. We are of the faithful indeed. We are here before the lights.

THE MARQUIS. Ah, do not speak of it! . . . It has put me in such a humor!

OTHER MARQUIS. Be comforted, marquis . . . here comes the candle-lighter!

THE AUDIENCE [*greeting the arrival of the candle-lighter*]. Ah! . . .

[*Many gather around the chandeliers while they are being lighted. A few have taken seats in the galleries.* LIGNIÈRE *enters, arm in arm with* CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE. LIGNIÈRE, *in somewhat disordered apparel; appearance of gentlemanly drunkard.* CHRISTIAN, *becomingly dressed, but in clothes of a slightly obsolete elegance*]

CUIGY. Lignière!

BRISSAILLE [*laughing*]. Not tipsy yet?

LIGNIÈRE [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. Shall I present you? [CHRISTIAN *nods assent*] Baron de Neuvillette . . . [*Exchange of bows*]

THE AUDIENCE [*cheering the ascent of the first lighted chandelier*]. Ah! . . .

CUIGY [*to* BRISSAILLE, *looking at* CHRISTIAN]. A charming head . . . charming!

FIRST MARQUIS [*who has overheard*]. Pooh! . . .

LIGNIÈRE [*presenting* CHRISTIAN]. Messieurs de Cuigy . . . de Brissaille . . .

CHRISTIAN [*bowing*]. Delighted! . . .

FIRST MARQUIS [*to* SECOND]. He is a pretty fellow enough, but is dressed in the fashion of some other year!

LIGNIÈRE [*to* CUIGY]. Monsieur is lately arrived from Touraine.

CHRISTIAN. Yes, I have been in Paris not over twenty days. I enter the Guards to-morrow, the Cadets.

FIRST MARQUIS [*looking at those who appear in the boxes*]. There comes the présidente Aubry!

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Oranges! Milk!

THE FIDDLERS [*tuning*]. La . . . la . . .

CUIGY [*to* CHRISTIAN, *indicating the house which is filling*]. A good house! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes, crowded.

FIRST MARQUIS. The whole of fashion!

[*They give the names of the women, as, very brilliantly attired, these enter the boxes. Exchange of bows and smiles*]

SECOND MARQUIS. Mesdames de Guéménée . . .

CUIGY. De Bois-Dauphin . . .

FIRST MARQUIS. Whom . . . time was! . . . we loved! . . .

BRISSAILLE. . . . de Chavigny . . .

SECOND MARQUIS. Who still plays havoc with our hearts!

LIGNIÈRE. *Tiens!* Monsieur de Corneille has come back from Rouen!

THE YOUTH [*to his father*]. The Academy is present?

THE BURGHER. Yes . . . I perceive more than one member of it. Yonder are Boudu, Boissat and Cureau . . . Porchères, Colomby, Bourzeys, Bourdon, Arbaut . . . All names of which not one will be forgotten. What a beautiful thought it is!

FIRST MARQUIS. Attention! Our précieuses are coming into their seats . . . Barthénoide, Urimédonte, Cassandace, Félixérie . . .

SECOND MARQUIS. Ah, how exquisite are their surnames! . . . Marquis, can you tell them off, all of them?

FIRST MARQUIS. I can tell them off, all of them, Marquis!

LIGNIÈRE [*drawing* CHRISTIAN *aside*]. Dear fellow, I came in here to be of use to you. The lady does not come. I revert to my vice!

CHRISTIAN [*imploring*]. No! No! . . . You who turn into ditties Town and Court, stay by me: you will be able to tell me for whom it is I am dying of love!

THE LEADER OF THE VIOLINS [*rapping on his desk with his bow*]. Gentlemen! . . . [*He raises his bow*]

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Macaroons . . . Citronade . . .

[*The fiddles begin playing*]

CHRISTIAN. I fear . . . oh, I fear to find that she is fanciful and intricate! I dare not speak to her, for I am of a simple wit. The language written and spoken in these days bewilders and baffles me. I am a plain soldier . . . shy, to boot. — She is always at the right, there, the end: the empty box.

LIGNIÈRE [*with show of leaving*]. I am going.

CHRISTIAN [*still attempting to detain him*]. Oh, no! . . . Stay, I beseech you!

LIGNIÈRE. I cannot. D'Assoucy is expecting me at the pot-house. Here is a mortal drought!

SWEETMEAT VENDER [*passing before him with a tray*]. Orangeade? . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Ugh!

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Milk? . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Pah! . . .

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Lacrima? . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Stop! [*To* CHRISTIAN] I will tarry a bit. . . . Let us see this lacrima? [*Sits down at the sweetmeat stand. The* VENDER *pours him a glass of lacrima*]

[*Shouts among the audience at the entrance of a little, merry-faced, roly-poly man*]

AUDIENCE. Ah, Ragueneau! . . .

LIGNIÈRE [*to* CHRISTIAN]. Ragueneau, who keeps the great cook-shop.

RAGUENEAU [*attired like a pastrycook in his Sunday best, coming quickly toward* LIGNIÈRE]. Monsieur, have you seen Monsieur de Cyrano?

LIGNIÈRE [*presenting* RAGUENEAU *to* CHRISTIAN]. The pastrycook of poets and of players!

RAGUENEAU [*abashed*]. Too much honor . . .

LIGNIÈRE. No modesty! . . . Mecænas! . . .

RAGUENEAU. It is true, those gentlemen are among my customers. . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Debitors! . . . A considerable poet himself. . . .

RAGUENEAU. It has been said! . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Daft on poetry! . . .

RAGUENEAU. It is true that for an ode . . .

LIGNIÈRE. You are willing to give at any time a tart!

RAGUENEAU. . . . let. A tart-let.

LIGNIÈRE. Kind soul, he tries to cheapen his charitable acts! And for a triolet were you not known to give . . .?

RAGUENEAU. Rolls. Just rolls.

LIGNIÈRE [*severely*]. Buttered! . . . And the play, you are fond of the play?

RAGUENEAU. It is with me a passion!

LIGNIÈRE. And you settle for your entrance fee with a pastry currency. Come now, among ourselves, what did you have to give to-day for admittance here?

RAGUENEAU. Four custards . . . eighteen lady-fingers. [*He looks all around*] Monsieur de Cyrano is not here. I wonder at it.

LIGNIÈRE. And why?

RAGUENEAU. Montfleury is billed to play.

LIGNIÈRE. So it is, indeed. That ton of man will to-day entrance us in the part of Phœdo . . . Phœdo! . . . But what is that to Cyrano?

RAGUENEAU. Have you not heard? He interdicted Montfleury, whom he has taken in aversion, from appearing for one month upon the stage.

LIGNIÈRE [*who is at his fourth glass*]. Well?

RAGUENEAU. Montfleury is billed to play.

CUIGY [*who has drawn near with his companions*]. He cannot be prevented.

RAGUENEAU. He cannot? . . . Well, I am here to see!

FIRST MARQUIS. What is this Cyrano?

CUIGY. A crack-brain!

SECOND MARQUIS. Of quality?

CUIGY. Enough for daily uses. He is a cadet in the Guards. [*Pointing out a gentleman who is coming and going about the pit, as if in search of somebody*] But his friend Le Bret can tell you. [*Calling*] Le Bret! . . . [LE BRET *comes toward them*] You are looking for Bergerac?

LE BRET. Yes. I am uneasy.

CUIGY. Is it not a fact that he is a most uncommon fellow?

LE BRET [*affectionately*]. The most exquisite being he is that walks beneath the moon!

RAGUENEAU. Poet!

CUIGY. Swordsman!

BRISSAILLE. Physicist!

LE BRET. Musician!

LIGNIÈRE. And what an extraordinary aspect he presents!

RAGUENEAU. I will not go so far as to say that I believe our grave Philippe de Champaigne will leave us a portrait of him; but, the bizarre, excessive, whimsical fellow that he is would certainly have furnished the late Jacques Callot with a type of madcap fighter for one of his masques. Hat with triple feather, doublet with twice-triple skirt, cloak which his interminable rapier lifts up behind, with pomp, like the insolent tail of a cock; prouder than all the Artabans of Gascony together, he goes about in his stiff Punchinello ruff, airing a nose. . . . Ah, gentlemen, what a nose is that! One cannot look upon such a specimen of the nasigera without exclaiming, "No! truly, the man exaggerates" . . . After that, one smiles, one says: "He will take it off." . . . But Monsieur de Bergerac never takes it off at all.

LE BRET [*shaking his head*]. He wears it always . . . and cuts down whoever breathes a syllable in comment.

RAGUENEAU [*proudly*]. His blade is half the shears of Fate!

FIRST MARQUIS [*shrugging his shoulders*]. He will not come!

RAGUENEAU. He will. I wager you a chicken à la Ragueneau.

FIRST MARQUIS [*laughing*]. Very well!

[*Murmur of admiration in the house.* ROXANE *has appeared in her box. She takes a seat in the front, her duenna at the back.* CHRISTIAN, *engaged in paying the sweetmeat vender, does not look*]

SECOND MARQUIS [*uttering a series of small squeals*]. Ah, gentlemen, but she is horrifically enticing!

FIRST MARQUIS. A strawberry set in a peach, and smiling!

SECOND MARQUIS. So fresh, that being near her, one might catch cold in his heart!

CHRISTIAN [*looks up, sees* ROXANE, *and, agitated, seizes* LIGNIÈRE *by the arm*]. That is she!

LIGNIÈRE [*looking*]. Ah, that is she! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes. Tell me at once. . . . Oh, I am afraid! . . .

LIGNIÈRE [*sipping his wine slowly*]. Magdelene Robin, surnamed Roxane. Subtle. Euphuistic.

CHRISTIAN. Alack-a-day!

LIGNIÈRE. Unmarried. An orphan. A cousin of Cyrano's . . . the one of whom they were talking.

[*While he is speaking, a richly dressed nobleman, wearing the order of the Holy Ghost on a blue ribbon across his breast, enters* ROXANE's *box, and, without taking a seat, talks with her a moment*]

CHRISTIAN [*starting*]. That man? . . .

LIGNIÈRE [*who is beginning to be tipsy, winking*]. Hé! Hé! Comte de Guiche. Enamored of her. But married to the niece of Armand de Richelieu. Wishes to manage a match between Roxane and certain sorry lord, one Monsieur de Valvert, vicomte and . . . easy. She does not subscribe to his views, but De Guiche is powerful: he can persecute to some purpose a simple commoner. But I have duly set forth his shady machinations in a song which . . . Ho! he must bear me a grudge! The end was wicked . . . Listen! . . . [*He rises, staggering, and lifting his glass, is about to sing*]

CHRISTIAN. No. Good evening.

LIGNIÈRE. You are going? . . .

CHRISTIAN. To find Monsieur de Valvert.

LIGNIÈRE. Have a care. You are the one who will get killed. [*Indicating* ROXANE *by a glance*] Stay. Some one is looking . . .

CHRISTIAN. It is true . . .

[*He remains absorbed in the contemplation of* ROXANE. *The pickpockets, seeing his abstracted air, draw nearer to him*]

LIGNIÈRE. Ah, you are going to stay. Well, I am going. I am thirsty! And I am looked for . . . at all the public-houses! [*Exit unsteadily*]

LE BRET [*who has made the circuit of the house, returning toward* RAGUENEAU, *in a tone of relief*]. Cyrano is not here.

RAGUENEAU. And yet . . .

LE BRET. I will trust to Fortune he has not seen the announcement.

THE AUDIENCE. Begin! Begin!

ONE OF THE MARQUISES [*watching* DE GUICHE, *who comes from* ROXANE's *box, and crosses the pit, surrounded by obsequious satellites, among whom the* VICOMTE DE VALVERT]. Always a court about him, De Guiche!

OTHER MARQUIS. Pf! . . . Another Gascon!

FIRST MARQUIS. A Gascon, of the cold and supple sort. That sort succeeds. Believe me, it will be best to offer him our duty.

[*They approach* DE GUICHE]

SECOND MARQUIS. These admirable ribbons! What color, Comte de Guiche? Should you call it Kiss-me-Sweet or . . . Expiring Fawn?

DE GUICHE. This shade is called Sick Spaniard.

FIRST MARQUIS. Appropriately called, for shortly, thanks to your valor, the Spaniard will be sick indeed, in Flanders!

DE GUICHE. I am going upon the stage. Are you coming? [*He walks toward the stage, followed by all the marquises and men of quality. He turns and calls*] Valvert, come!

CHRISTIAN [*who has been listening and watching them, starts on hearing that name*]. The vicomte! . . . Ah, in his face . . . in his face I will fling my . . . [*He puts his hand to his pocket and finds the pickpocket's hand. He turns*] *Hein?*

PICKPOCKET. Aï.

CHRISTIAN [*without letting him go*]. I was looking for a glove.

PICKPOCKET [*with an abject smile*]. And you found a hand. [*In a different*

tone, low and rapid] Let me go . . . I will tell you a secret.

CHRISTIAN [*without releasing him*]. Well?

PICKPOCKET. Lignière who has just left you . . .

CHRISTIAN [*as above*]. Yes? . . .

PICKPOCKET. Has not an hour to live. A song he made annoyed one of the great, and a hundred men — I am one of them — will be posted to-night . . .

CHRISTIAN. A hundred? . . . By whom?

PICKPOCKET. Honor . . .

CHRISTIAN [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Oh! . . .

PICKPOCKET [*with great dignity*]. Among rogues!

CHRISTIAN. Where will they be posted?

PICKPOCKET. At the Porte de Nesle, on his way home. Inform him.

CHRISTIAN [*letting him go*]. But where can I find him?

PICKPOCKET. Go to all the taverns: the Golden Vat, the Pine-Apple, the Belt and Bosom, the Twin Torches, the Three Funnels, and in each one leave a scrap of writing warning him.

CHRISTIAN. Yes. I will run! . . . Ah, the blackguards! A hundred against one! . . . [*Looks lovingly toward* ROXANE] Leave her! . . . [*Furiously, looking toward* VALVERT] And him! . . . But Lignière must be prevented. [*Exit running*]

[DE GUICHE, *the* MARQUISES, *all the gentry have disappeared behind the curtain, to place themselves on the stage-seats. The pit is crowded. There is not an empty seat in the boxes or the gallery*]

THE AUDIENCE. Begin!

A BURGHER [*whose wig goes sailing off at the end of a string held by one of the pages in the upper gallery*]. My wig!

SCREAMS OF DELIGHT. He is bald! . . . The pages! . . . Well done! . . . Ha, ha, ha! . . .

THE BURGHER [*furious, shaking his fist*]. Imp of Satan! . . .

[*Laughter and screams, beginning very loud and decreasing suddenly. Dead silence*]

LE BRET [*astonished*]. This sudden hush? . . . [*One of the spectators whispers in his ear*] Ah? . . .

THE SPECTATOR. I have it from a reliable quarter.

RUNNING MURMURS. Hush! . . . Has he come? No! . . . Yes, he has! . . . In the box with the grating. . . . The cardinal! . . . the cardinal! . . . the cardinal! . . .

ONE OF THE PAGES. What a shame! . . . Now we shall have to behave!

[*Knocking on the stage. Complete stillness. Pause*]

VOICE OF ONE OF THE MARQUISES [*breaking the deep silence, behind the curtain*]. Snuff that candle!

OTHER MARQUIS [*thrusting his head out between the curtains*]. A chair! [*A chair is passed from hand to hand, above the heads. The* MARQUIS *takes it and disappears, after kissing his hand repeatedly toward the boxes*]

A SPECTATOR. Silence!

[*Once more, the three knocks. The curtain opens. Tableau. The* MARQUISES *seated at the sides, in attitudes of languid haughtiness. The stage-setting is the faint-colored bluish sort usual in a pastoral. Four small crystal candelabra light the stage. The violins play softly*]

LE BRET [*to* RAGUENEAU, *under breath*]. Is Montfleury the first to appear?

RAGUENEAU [*likewise under breath*]. Yes. The opening lines are his.

LE BRET. Cyrano is not here.

RAGUENEAU. I have lost my wager.

LE BRET. Let us be thankful. Let us be thankful.

[*A bagpipe is heard.* MONTFLEURY *appears upon the stage, enormous, in a conventional shepherd's costume, with a rose-wreathed hat set jauntily on the side of his head, breathing into a beribboned bagpipe*]

THE PIT [*applauding*]. Bravo, Montfleury! Montfleury!

MONTFLEURY [*after bowing, proceeds to play the part of* PHŒBO].

Happy the man who, freed from Fashion's fickle sway,
In exile self-prescribed whiles peaceful hours away;
Who when Zephyrus sighs amid the answering trees. . . .

A VOICE [*from the middle of the pit*]. Rogue! Did I not forbid you for one month?

[*Consternation. Every one looks around. Murmurs*]

VARIOUS VOICES. *Hein?* What? What is the matter?

[*Many in the boxes rise to see*]

CUIGY. It is he!

LE BRET [*alarmed*]. Cyrano!

THE VOICE. King of the Obese! Incontinently vanish! . . .

THE WHOLE AUDIENCE [*indignant*]. Oh! . . .

MONTFLEURY. But. . . .

THE VOICE. You stop to muse upon the matter?

SEVERAL VOICES [*from the pit and the boxes*]. Hush! . . . Enough! . . . Proceed, Montfleury. . . . Fear nothing!

MONTFLEURY [*in an unsteady voice*]. Happy the man who freed from Fashion's f——. . .

THE VOICE [*more threatening than before*]. How is this? Shall I be constrained, Man of the Monster Belly, to enforce my regulation . . . regularly?

[*An arm holding a cane leaps above the level of the heads*]

MONTFLEURY [*in a voice growing fainter and fainter*]. Happy the man . . .

[*The cane is wildly flourished*]

THE VOICE. Leave the stage!

THE PIT. Oh! . . .

MONTFLEURY [*choking*]. Happy the man who freed . . .

CYRANO [*appears above the audience, standing upon a chair, his arms folded on his chest, his hat at a combative angle, his moustache on end, his nose terrifying*]. Ah! I shall lose my temper!

[*Sensation at sight of him*]

MONTFLEURY [*to the* MARQUISES]. Messieurs, I appeal to you!

ONE OF THE MARQUISES [*languidly*]. But go ahead! . . . Play!

CYRANO. Fat man, if you attempt it, I will dust the paint off you with this!

THE MARQUIS. Enough!

CYRANO. Let every little lordling keep silence in his seat, or I will ruffle his ribbons with my cane!

ALL THE MARQUISES [*rising*]. This is too much! . . . Montfleury. . . .

CYRANO. Let Montfleury go home, or stay, and, having cut his ears off, I will disembowel him!

A VOICE. But . . .

CYRANO. Let him go home, I said!

OTHER VOICE. But after all . . .

CYRANO. It is not yet done? [*With show of turning up his sleeves*] Very well, upon that stage, as on a platter trimmed with green, you shall see me carve that mount of brawn. . . .

MONTFLEURY [*calling up his whole dignity*]. Monsieur, you cast indignity, in my person, upon the Muse!

CYRANO [*very civilly*]. Monsieur, if that lady, with whom you have naught to do, had the pleasure of beholding you . . . just as you stand, there, like a decorated pot! . . . she could not live, I do protest, but she hurled her buskin at you!

THE PIT. Montfleury! . . . Montfleury! . . . Give us Baro's piece!

CYRANO [*to those shouting around him*]. I beg you will show some regard for my scabbard: it is ready to give up the sword!

[*The space around him widens*]

THE CROWD [*backing away*]. Hey . . . softly, there!

CYRANO [*to* MONTFLEURY]. Go off!

THE CROWD [*closing again, and grumbling*]. Oh! . . . Oh!

CYRANO [*turning suddenly*]. Has somebody objections? [*The crowd again pushes away from him*]

A VOICE [*at the back, singing*].

Monsieur de Cyrano, one sees,
Inclines to be tyrannical;
In spite of that tyrannicle
We shall see La Clorise!

THE WHOLE AUDIENCE [*catching up the tune*]. La Clorise! La Clorise!

CYRANO. Let me hear that song again, and I will do you all to death with my stick!

A BURGHER. Samson come back! . . .

CYRANO. Lend me your jaw, good man!

A LADY [*in one of the boxes*]. This is unheard of!

A MAN. It is scandalous!

A BURGHER. It is irritating, to say no more.

A PAGE. What fun it is!

THE PIT. Ksss! . . . Montfleury! . . . Cyrano! . . .

CYRANO. Be still! . . .

THE PIT [*in uproar*]. Hee-haw! . . . Baaaaah! . . . Bow-wow! . . . Cocka-doodledooooo!

CYRANO. I will . . .

A PAGE. Meeeow!

CYRANO. I order you to hold your tongues! . . . I dare the floor collectively to utter another sound! . . . I challenge you, one and all! . . . I will take down your names. . . . Step forward, budding heroes! Each in his turn. You shall be given numbers. Come, which one of you will open the joust with me? You, monsieur? No! You? No! The first that offers is

promised all the mortuary honors due the brave. Let all who wish to die hold up their hands! [*Silence*] It is modesty that makes you shrink from the sight of my naked sword? Not a name? Not a hand? — Very good. Then I proceed. [*Turning toward the stage where* MONTFLEURY *is waiting in terror*] As I was saying, it is my wish to see the stage cured of this tumor. Otherwise . . . [*Claps hand to his sword*] the lancet!

MONTFLEURY. I . . .

CYRANO [*gets down from his chair, and sits in the space that has become vacant around him, with the ease of one at home*]. Thrice will I clap my hands, O plenilune! At the third clap . . . eclipse!

THE PIT [*diverted*]. Ah! . . .

CYRANO [*clapping his hands*]. One! . . .

MONTFLEURY. I . . .

A VOICE [*from one of the boxes*]. Do not go! . . .

THE PIT. He will stay! . . . He will go! . . .

MONTFLEURY. Messieurs, I feel . . .

CYRANO. Two! . . .

MONTFLEURY. I feel it will perhaps be wiser . . .

CYRANO. Three! . . .

[MONTFLEURY *disappears, as if through a trap-door. Storm of laughter, hissing, catcalls*]

THE HOUSE. Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . . Milksop! . . . Come back! . . .

CYRANO [*beaming, leans back in his chair and crosses his legs*]. Let him come back, if he dare!

A BURGHER. The spokesman of the company!

[BELLEROSE *comes forward on the stage and bows*]

THE BOXES. Ah, there comes Bellerose!

BELLEROSE [*with elegant bearing and diction*]. Noble ladies and gentlemen . . .

THE PIT. No! No! Jodelet! . . . We want Jodelet! . . .

JODELET [*comes forward, speaks through his nose*]. Pack of swine!

THE PIT. That is right! . . . Well said! . . . Bravo!

JODELET. Don't bravo me! . . . The portly tragedian, whose paunch is your delight, felt sick! . . .

THE PIT. He is a poltroon! . . .

JODELET. He was obliged to leave . . .

THE PIT. Let him come back!

SOME. No!

OTHERS. Yes! . . .

A YOUTH [*to* CYRANO]. But, when all is said, monsieur, what good grounds have you for hating Montfleury?

CYRANO [*amiably, sitting as before*]. Young gosling, I have two, whereof each, singly, would be ample. Primo: He is an execrable actor, who bellows, and with grunts to disgrace a water-carrier launches the verse that should go forth as it had pinions! . . . Secundo: is my secret.

THE OLD BURGHER [*behind* CYRANO]. But without compunction you deprive us of hearing La Clorise. I am determined . . .

CYRANO [*turning his chair around so as to face the old gentleman; respectfully*]. Venerable mule, old Baro's verses being what they are, I do it without compunction, as you say.

THE PRÉCIEUSES [*in the boxes*]. Ha! . . . Ho! . . . Our own Baro! . . . My dear, did you hear that? How can such a thing be said? . . . Ha! . . . Ho! . . .

CYRANO [*turning his chair so as to face the boxes; gallantly*]. Beautiful creatures, do you bloom and shine, be ministers of dreams, your smiles our anodyne. Inspire poets, but poems . . . spare to judge!

BELLEROSE. But the money which must be given back at the door!

CYRANO [*turning his chair to face the stage*]. Bellerose, you have said the only intelligent thing that has, as yet, been said! Far from me to wrong by so much as a fringe the worshipful mantle of Thespis . . . [*He rises and flings a bag upon the stage*] Catch! . . . and keep quiet!

THE HOUSE [*dazzled*]. Ah! . . . Oh! . . .

JODELET [*nimbly picking up the bag, weighing it with his hand*]. For such a price, you are authorized, monsieur, to come and stop the performance every day!

THE HOUSE. Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . .

JODELET. Should we be hooted in a body! . . .

BELLEROSE. The house must be evacuated!

JODELET. Evacuate it!

[*The audience begins to leave;* CYRANO *looking on with a satisfied air. The* CROWD, *however, becoming interested in the following scene, the exodus is suspended. The* WOMEN *in the boxes who were already standing and had put on their wraps,*

stop to listen and end by resuming their seats]

LE BRET [*to* CYRANO]. What you have done . . . is mad!

A BORE. Montfleury! . . . the eminent actor! . . . What a scandal! . . . But the Duc de Candale is his patron! . . . Have you a patron, you?

CYRANO. No!

THE BORE. You have not?

CYRANO. No!

THE BORE. What? You are not protected by some great nobleman under the cover of whose name. . . .

CYRANO [*exasperated*]. No, I have told you twice. Must I say the same thing thrice? No, I have no protector . . . [*hand on sword*] but this will do.

THE BORE. Then, of course, you will leave town.

CYRANO. That will depend.

THE BORE. But the Duc de Candale has a long arm . . .

CYRANO. Not so long as mine . . . [*pointing to his sword*] pieced out with this!

THE BORE. But you cannot have the presumption . . .

CYRANO. I can, yes.

THE BORE. But . . .

CYRANO. And now, . . . face about!

THE BORE. But . . .

CYRANO. Face about, I say . . . or else, tell me why you are looking at my nose.

THE BORE [*bewildered*]. I . . .

CYRANO [*advancing upon him*]. In what is it unusual?

THE BORE [*backing*]. Your worship is mistaken.

CYRANO [*same business as above*]. Is it flabby and pendulous, like a proboscis?

THE BORE. I never said . . .

CYRANO. Or hooked like a hawk's beak?

THE BORE. I . . .

CYRANO. Do you discern a mole upon the tip?

THE BORE. But . . .

CYRANO. Or is a fly disporting himself thereon? What is there wonderful about it?

THE BORE. Oh . . .

CYRANO. Is it a freak of nature?

THE BORE. But I had refrained from casting so much as a glance at it!

CYRANO. And why, I pray, should you not look at it?

THE BORE. I had . . .

CYRANO. So it disgusts you?

THE BORE. Sir . . .

CYRANO. Its color strikes you as unwholesome?

THE BORE. Sir . . .

CYRANO. Its shape, unfortunate?

THE BORE. But far from it!

CYRANO. Then wherefore that depreciating air? . . . Perhaps monsieur thinks it a shade too large?

THE BORE. Indeed not. No, indeed. I think it small . . . small, — I should have said, minute!

CYRANO. What? How? Charge me with such a ridiculous defect? Small, my nose? Ho! . . .

THE BORE. Heavens!

CYRANO. Enormous, my nose! . . . Contemptible stutterer, snub-nosed and flat-headed, be it known to you that I am proud, proud of such an appendage! inasmuch as a great nose is properly the index of an affable, kindly, courteous man, witty, liberal, brave, such as I am! and such as you are for evermore precluded from supposing yourself, deplorable rogue! For the inglorious surface my hand encounters above your ruff, is no less devoid — [*Strikes him*]

THE BORE. Aï! aï! . . .

CYRANO. Of pride, alacrity and sweep, of perception and of gift, of heavenly spark, of sumptuousness, to sum up all, of NOSE, than that [*turns him around by the shoulders and suits the action to the word*], which stops my boot below your spine!

THE BORE [*running off*]. Help! The watch! . . .

CYRANO. Warning to the idle who might find entertainment in my organ of smell. . . . And if the facetious fellow be of birth, my custom is, before I let him go, to chasten him, in front, and higher up, with steel, and not with hide!

DE GUICHE [*who has stepped down from the stage with the* MARQUISES]. He is becoming tiresome!

VALVERT [*shrugging his shoulders*]. It is empty bluster!

DE GUICHE. Will no one take him up?

VALVERT. No one? . . . Wait! I will have one of those shots at him! [*He approaches* CYRANO, *who is watching him, and stops in front of him, in an attitude of silly swagger*] Your . . . your nose is . . . errr . . . Your nose . . . is very large!

CYRANO [*gravely*]. Very.

VALVERT [*laughs*]. Ha! . . .

CYRANO [*imperturbable*]. Is that all?

VALVERT. But . . .

CYRANO. Ah, no, young man, that is not enough! You might have said, dear me, there are a thousand things . . . varying the tone. . . . For instance . . . here you are: — Aggressive: "I, monsieur, if I had such a nose, nothing would serve but I must cut it off!" Amicable: "It must be in your way while drinking; you ought to have a special beaker made!" Descriptive: "It is a crag! . . . a peak! . . . a promontory! . . . A promonotory, did I say? . . . It is a peninsula!" Inquisitive: "What may the office be of that oblong receptacle? Is it an inkhorn or a scissorcase?" Mincing: "Do you so dote on birds, you have, fond as a father, been at pains to fit the little darlings with a roost?" Blunt: "Tell me, monsieur, you, when you smoke, is it possible you blow the vapor through your nose without a neighbor crying 'The chimney is afire?'" Anxious: "Go with caution, I beseech, lest your head, dragged over by that weight, should drag you over!" Tender: "Have a little sunshade made for it! It might get freckled!" Learned: "None but the beast, monsieur, mentioned by Aristophanes, the hippocampelephantocamelos, can have borne beneath his forehead so much cartilage and bone!" Off-hand: "What, comrade, is that sort of peg in style? Capital to hang one's hat upon!" Emphatic: "No wind can hope, O lordly nose, to give the whole of you a cold, but the Nor-Wester!" Dramatic: "It is the Red Sea when it bleeds!" Admiring: "What a sign for a perfumer's shop!" Lyrical: "Art thou a Triton, and is that thy conch?" Simple: "A monument! When is admission free?" Deferent: "Suffer, monsieur, that I should pay you my respects: that is what I call possessing gable-front on street!" Rustic: "Hi, boys! Call that a nose? Yer don't fub me! It's either a prize carrot or else a stunted gourd!" Military: "Level against the cavalry!" Practical: "Will you put it up for raffle? Indubitably, sir, it will be the feature of the game!" And finally in parody of weeping Pyramus: "Behold, behold the nose that traitorously destroyed the beauty of its master! and is blushing for the same!" — That, my dear sir, or something not unlike, is what you would have said to me, had you the smallest leaven of letters or of wit; but of wit, O most pitiable of objects made by God, you never had a rudiment, and of letters, you have just those that are needed to spell "fool!" — But, had it been otherwise, and had you been possessed of the fertile fancy requisite to shower upon me, here, in this noble company, that volley of sprightly pleasantries, still should you not have delivered yourself of so much as a quarter of the tenth part of the beginning of the first. . . . For I let off these good things at myself, and with sufficient zest, but do not suffer another to let them off at me!

DE GUICHE [*attempting to lead away the amazed vicomte*]. Let be, vicomte!

VALVERT. That insufferable haughty bearing! . . . A clodhopper without . . . without so much as gloves . . . who goes abroad without points . . . or bowknots! . . .

CYRANO. My foppery is of the inner man. I do not trick myself out like a popinjay, but I am more particular, if I am not so showy. I would not sally forth, by any chance, not washed quite clean of an affront; my conscience foggy about the eye, my honor crumpled, my nicety blackrimmed. I walk with all upon me furbished bright. I plume myself with independence and straightforwardness. It is not a handsome figure, it is my soul, I hold erect as in a brace. I go decked with exploits in place of ribbon bows. I taper to a point my wit like a moustache. And at my passage through the crowd true sayings ring like spurs!

VALVERT. But, sir . . .

CYRANO. I am without gloves? . . . a mighty matter! I only had one left, of a very ancient pair, and even that became a burden to me . . . I left it in somebody's face.

VALVERT. Villain, clod-poll, flat-foot, refuse of the earth!

CYRANO [*taking off his hat and bowing as if the* VICOMTE *had been introducing himself*]. Ah? . . . And mine, Cyrano Savinien-Hercule of Bergerac!

VALVERT [*exasperated*]. Buffoon!

CYRANO [*giving a sudden cry, as if seized with a cramp*]. Aï! . . .

VALVERT [*who had started toward the back, turning*]. What is he saying now?

CYRANO [*screwing his face as if in pain*]. It must have leave to stir . . . it has a cramp! It is bad for it to be kept still so long!

VALVERT. What is the matter?

CYRANO. My rapier prickles like a foot asleep!

VALVERT [*drawing*]. So be it!

CYRANO. I shall give you a charming little hurt!

VALVERT [*contemptuous*]. A poet!

CYRANO. Yes, a poet, . . . and to such an extent, that, while we fence, I will, hop! extempore, compose you a ballade!

VALVERT. A ballade?

CYRANO. I fear you do not know what that is.

VALVERT. But . . .

CYRANO [*as if saying a lesson*]. The ballade is composed of three stanzas of eight lines each . . .

VALVERT [*stamps with his feet*]. Oh . . .

CYRANO [*continuing*]. And an envoi of four.

VALVERT. You . . .

CYRANO. I will with the same breath fight you and compose one. And at the last line, I will hit you.

VALVERT. Indeed you will not!

CYRANO. Not? . . . [*Declaiming*]

Ballade of the duel which in Burgundy House
Monsieur de Bergerac fought with a jackanapes.

VALVERT. And what is that, if you please?

CYRANO. That is the title.

THE AUDIENCE [*at the highest pitch of excitement*]. Make room! . . . Good sport! . . . Stand aside! . . . Keep still! . . .

[*Tableau. A ring, in the pit, of the interested;* the MARQUISES *and* OFFICERS *scattered among the* BURGHERS *and* COMMON PEOPLE. *The* PAGES *have climbed on the shoulders of various ones, the better to see. All the women are standing in the boxes. At the right,* DE GUICHE *and his attendant gentlemen. At the left,* LE BRET, RAGUENEAU, CUIGY, *etc.*]

CYRANO [*closing his eyes a second*]. Wait. I am settling upon the rhymes. There. I have them. [*In declaiming, he suits the action to the word*]

Of my broad felt made lighter,
I cast my mantle broad,
And stand, poet and fighter,
To do and to record.
I bow, I draw my sword. . . .
En garde! with steel and wit
I play you at first abord . . .
At the last line, I hit!

[*They begin fencing*]

You should have been politer;
Where had you best be gored?
The left side or the right —— ah?
Or next your azure cord?
Or where the spleen is stored?
Or in the stomach pit?
Come we to quick accord . . .
At the last time, I hit!

You falter, you turn whiter?
You do so to afford
Your foe a rhyme in "iter"? . . .
You thrust at me — I ward —
And balance is restored.
Laridon! Look to your spit! . . .
No, you shall not be floored
Before my cue to hit!

[*He announces solemnly*]

ENVOI

Prince, call upon the Lord! . . .
I skirmish . . . feint a bit . . .
I lunge! . . . I keep my word!
[*The* VISCOMTE *staggers;* CYRANO *bows*]
At the last line, I hit!

[*Acclamations. Applause from the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs are thrown. The* OFFICERS *surround and congratulate* CYRANO. RAGUENEAU *dances with delight.* LE BRET *is tearfully joyous and at the same time highly troubled. The friends of the* VISCOMTE *support him off the stage*]

THE CROWD [*in a long shout*]. Ah! . . .

A LIGHT-CAVALRY MAN. Superb!

A WOMAN. Sweet!

RAGUENEAU. Heaven-astounding!

A MARQUIS. Novel!

LE BRET. Insensate!

THE CROWD [*pressing around* CYRANO]. Congratulations! . . . Well done! . . . Bravo! . . .

A WOMAN'S VOICE. He is a hero!

A MOUSQUETAIRE [*striding swiftly toward* CYRANO, *with outstretched hand*]. Monsieur, will you allow me? It was quite, quite excellently done, and I think I know whereof I speak. But, as a fact, I expressed my mind before, by making a huge noise. . . . [*He retires*]

CYRANO [*to* CUIGY]. Who may the gentleman be?

CUIGY. D'Artagnan.

LE BRET [*to* CYRANO, *taking his arm*]. Come, I wish to talk with you.

CYRANO. Wait till the crowd has thinned. [*To* BELLEROSE] I may remain?

BELLEROSE [*deferentially*]. Why, certainly! . . .

[*Shouts are heard outside*]

JODELET [*after looking*]. They are hooting Montfleury.

BELLEROSE [*solemnly*]. *Sic transit!* . . . [*In a different tone, to the doorkeeper and the candle snuffer*] Sweep and close. Leave the lights. We shall come back, after eating, to rehearse a new farce for to-morrow. [*Exeunt* JODELET *and* BELLEROSE, *after bowing very low to* CYRANO]

THE DOORKEEPER [*to* CYRANO]. Monsieur will not be going to dinner?

CYRANO. I? . . . No.

[*The doorkeeper withdraws*]

LE BRET [*to* CYRANO]. And this, because? . . .

CYRANO [*proudly*]. Because . . . [*in a different tone, having seen that the doorkeeper is too far to overhear*] I have not a penny!

LE BRET [*making the motion of flinging a bag*]. How is this? The bag of crowns. . . .

CYRANO. Monthly remittance, thou lastedst but a day!

LE BRET. And to keep you the remainder of the month? . . .

CYRANO. Nothing is left!

LE BRET. But then, flinging that bag, what a child's prank!

CYRANO. But what a gesture! . . .

THE SWEETMEAT-VENDER [*coughing behind her little counter*]. H'm! . . . [CYRANO *and* LE BRET *turn toward her. She comes timidly forward*] Monsieur, to know you have not eaten . . . makes my heart ache. [*Pointing to the sweetmeat-stand*] I have there all that is needed . . . [*Impulsively*] Help yourself!

CYRANO [*taking off his hat*]. Dear child, despite my Gascon pride, which forbids that I should profit at your hand by the most inconsiderable of dainties, I fear too much lest a denial should grieve you: I will accept therefore . . . [*He goes to the stand and selects*] Oh, a trifle! . . . A grape off this. . . . [*She proffers the bunch, he takes a single grape*] No . . . one! This glass of water . . . [*She starts to pour wine into it, he stops her*] No . . . clear! And half a macaroon. [*He breaks in two the macaroon, and returns half*]

LE BRET. This comes near being silly!

THE SWEETMEAT-VENDER. Oh, you will take something more! . . .

CYRANO. Yes. Your hand to kiss. [*He kisses the hand she holds out to him, as if it were that of a princess*]

THE SWEETMEAT-VENDER. Monsieur, I thank you. [*Curtseys*] Good evening! [*Exit*]

CYRANO [*to* LE BRET]. I am listening. [*He establishes himself before the stand, sets the macaroon before him*] Dinner! [*Does the same with the glass of water*] Drink! [*And with the grape*] Dessert! [*He sits down*] La! let me begin! I was as hungry as a wolf! [*Eating*] You were saying?

LE BRET. That if you listen to none but those great boobies and swashbucklers your judgment will become wholly perverted. Inquire, will you, of the sensible, concerning the effect produced to-day by your prowesses.

CYRANO [*finishing his macaroon*]. Enormous!

LE BRET. The cardinal . . .

CYRANO [*beaming*]. He was there, the cardinal?

LE BRET. Must have found what you did . . .

CYRANO. To a degree, original.

LE BRET. Still . . .

CYRANO. He is a poet. It cannot be distasteful to him wholly that one should deal confusion to a fellow-poet's play.

LE BRET. But, seriously, you make too many enemies!

CYRANO [*biting into the grape*]. How many, thereabouts, should you think I made to-night?

LE BRET. Eight and forty. Not mentioning the women.

CYRANO. Come, tell them over!

LE BRET. Montfleury, the old merchant, De Guiche, the Vicomte, Baro, the whole Academy . . .

CYRANO. Enough! You steep me in bliss!

LE BRET. But whither will the road you follow lead you? What can your object be?

CYRANO. I was wandering aimlessly; too many roads were open . . . too many resolves, too complex, allowed of being taken. I took . . .

LE BRET. Which?

CYRANO. By far the simplest of them all. I decided to be, in every matter, always, admirable!

LE BRET [*shrugging his shoulders*]. That will do. — But tell me, will you not, the motive — look, the true one! — of your dislike to Montfleury.

CYRANO [*rising*]. That old Silenus, who has not seen his knees this many a year, still believes himself a delicate desperate danger to the fair. And as he struts and burrs upon the stage, makes sheep's-eyes at them with his moist frog's-eyes. And I have hated him . . . oh, properly! . . . since the night he was so daring as to cast his glance on her . . . her, who — Oh, I thought I saw a slug crawl over a flower!

LE BRET [*amazed*]. Hey? What? Is it possible? . . .

CYRANO [*with a bitter laugh*]. That I should love? [*In a different tone, seriously*] I love.

LE BRET. And may one know? . . . You never told me. . . .

CYRANO. Whom I love? . . . Come, think a little. The dream of being beloved, even by the beautiless, is made, to me, an empty dream indeed by this good nose, my forerunner ever by a quarter of an hour. Hence, whom should I love? . . . It seems superfluous to tell you! . . . I love . . . it was inevitable! . . . the most beautiful that breathes!

LE BRET. The most beautiful? . . .

CYRANO. No less, in the whole world! And the most resplendent, and the most delicate of wit, and among the golden-haired . . . [*with overwhelming despair*] Still the superlative!

LE BRET. Dear me, what is this fair one?

CYRANO. All unawares, a deadly snare, exquisite without concern to be so. A snare of nature's own, a musk-rose, in which ambush Love lies low. Who has seen her smile remembers the ineffable! There is not a thing so common but she turns it into prettiness; and in the merest nod or beck she can make manifest all the attributes of a goddess. No, Venus! you cannot step into your iridescent shell, nor, Dian, you walk through the blossoming groves, as she steps into her chair and walks in Paris!

LE BRET. Sapristi! I understand! It is clear!

CYRANO. It is pellucid.

LE BRET. Magdeleine Robin, your cousin?

CYRANO. Yes, Roxane.

LE BRET. But, what could be better? You love her? Tell her so! You covered yourself with glory in her sight a moment since.

CYRANO. Look well at me, dear friend, and tell me how much hope you think can be justly entertained with this protuberance. Oh, I foster no illusions! . . . Sometimes, indeed, yes, in the violet dusk, I yield, even I! to a dreamy mood. I penetrate some garden that lies sweetening the hour. With my poor great devil of a nose I sniff the April. . . . And as I follow with my eyes some woman passing with some cavalier, I think how dear would I hold having to walk beside me, linked like that, slowly, in the soft moonlight, such a one! I kindle — I forget — and then . . . then suddenly I see the shadow of my profile upon the garden-wall!

LE BRET [*touched*]. My friend . . .

CYRANO. Friend, I experience a bad half hour sometimes, in feeling so unsightly . . . and alone.

LE BRET [*in quick sympathy, taking his hand*]. You weep?

CYRANO. Ah, God forbid! That? Never! No, that would be unsightly to excess! That a tear should course the whole length of this nose! Never, so long as I am accountable, shall the divine loveliness of tears be implicated with so much gross ugliness! Mark me well, nothing is so holy as are tears, nothing! and never shall it be that, rousing mirth through me, a single one of them shall seem ridiculous!

LE BRET. Come, do not despond! Love is a lottery.

CYRANO [*shaking his head*]. No! I love Cleopatra: do I resemble Cæsar? I worship Berenice: do I put you in mind of Titus?

LE BRET. But your courage . . . and your wit! — The little girl who but a moment ago bestowed on you that very modest meal, her eyes, you must have seen as much, did not exactly hate you!

CYRANO [*impressed*]. That is true!

LE BRET. You see? So, then! — But Roxane herself, in following your duel, went lily-pale.

CYRANO. Lily-pale? . . .

LE BRET. Her mind, her heart as well, are struck with wonder! Be bold, speak to her, in order that she may . . .

CYRANO. Laugh in my face! . . .

No, there is but one thing upon earth I fear. . . . It is that.

THE DOORKEEPER [*admitting the* DUENNA *to* CYRANO]. Monsieur, you are inquired for.

CYRANO [*seeing the* DUENNA]. Ah, my God! . . . her duenna!

THE DUENNA [*with a great curtsey*]. Somebody wishes to know of her valorous cousin where one may, in private, see him.

CYRANO [*upset*]. See me?

THE DUENNA [*with curtsey*]. See you. There are things for your ear.

CYRANO. There are . . . ?

THE DUENNA [*other curtsey*]. Things.

CYRANO [*staggering*]. Ah, my God! . . .

THE DUENNA. Somebody intends, to-morrow, at the earliest roses of the dawn, to hear Mass at Saint Roch.

CYRANO [*upholds himself by leaning on* LE BRET]. Ah, my God!

THE DUENNA. That over, where might one step in a moment, have a little talk?

CYRANO [*losing his senses*]. Where? . . . I . . . But . . . Ah, my God!

THE DUENNA. Expedition, if you please.

CYRANO. I am casting about . . .

THE DUENNA. Where?

CYRANO. At . . . at . . . at Ragueneau's . . . the pastrycook's.

THE DUENNA. He lodges?

CYRANO. In . . . In Rue . . . Ah, my God! my God! . . . St. Honoré.

THE DUENNA [*retiring*]. We will be there. Do not fail. At seven.

CYRANO. I will not fail.

[*Exit* DUENNA]

CYRANO [*falling on* LE BRET'S *neck*]. To me . . . from her . . . a tryst!

LE BRET. Well, your gloom is dispelled?

CYRANO. Ah, to whatever end it may be, she is aware of my existence!

LE BRET. And now you will be calm?

CYRANO [*beside himself*]. Now, I shall be fulminating and frenetical! I want an army all complete to put to rout! I have ten hearts and twenty arms . . . I cannot now be suited with felling dwarfs to earth. . . . [*At the top of his lungs*] Giants are what I want!

[*During the last lines, on the stage at the back, shadowy shapes of* PLAYERS *have been moving about. The rehearsal has begun; the fiddlers have resumed their places*]

A VOICE [*from the stage*]. Hey! Psst! Over there! A little lower. We are trying to rehearse!

CYRANO [*laughing*]. We are going! [*He goes toward the back*]

[*Through the street door, enter* CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, *several* OFFICERS *supporting* LIGNIÈRE *in a state of complete intoxication*]

CUIGY. Cyrano!

CYRANO. What is this?

CUIGY. A *turdus vinaticus* we are bringing you.

CYRANO [*recognizing him*]. Lignière! Hey, what has happened to you?

CUIGY. He is looking for you.

BRISSAILLE. He cannot go home.

CYRANO. Why?

LIGNIÈRE [*in a thick voice, showing him a bit of crumpled paper*]. This note bids me beware . . . A hundred men against me . . . on account of lampoon. . . . Grave danger threatening me. . . . Porte de Nesle . . . must pass it to get home. Let me come and sleep under your roof.

CYRANO. A hundred, did you say? — You shall sleep at home!

LIGNIÈRE [*frightened*]. But . . .

CYRANO [*in a terrible voice, pointing to the lighted lantern which the* DOORKEEPER *stands swinging as he listens to this scene*]. Take that lantern [LIGNIÈRE *hurriedly takes it*] and walk! . . . I swear to tuck you in your bed to-night myself. [*To the* OFFICERS] You, follow at a distance. You may look on!

CUIGY. But a hundred men . . .

CYRANO. Are not one man too many for my mood to-night!

[*The* PLAYERS, *in their several costumes, have stepped down from the stage and come nearer*]

LE BRET. But why take under your especial care . . .

CYRANO. Still Le Bret is not satisfied!

LE BRET. That most commonplace of sots?

CYRANO [*slapping* LIGNIÈRE *on the shoulder*]. Because this sot, this cask of muscatel, this hogshead of rosolio, did once upon a time a wholly pretty thing. On leaving Mass, having seen her whom he loved take holy-water, as the rite prescribes, he, whom the sight of water puts to flight, ran to the holy-water bowl, and, stooping over, drank it dry. . . .

AN ACTRESS [*in the costume of soubrette*]. *Tiens*, that was nice!

CYRANO. Was it not, soubrette?

THE SOUBRETTE [*to the others*]. But why are they, a hundred, all against one poor poet?

CYRANO. Let us start! [*To the* OFFICERS] And you, gentlemen, when you see me attack, whatever you may suppose to be my danger, do not stir to second me!

ANOTHER OF THE ACTRESSES [*jumping from the stage*]. Oh, I will not miss seeing this!

CYRANO. Come!

ANOTHER ACTRESS [*likewise jumping from the stage, to an elderly* ACTOR]. Cassandre, will you not come?

CYRANO. Come, all of you! the Doctor, Isabel, Leander, all! and you shall lend, charming fantastic swarm, an air of Italian farce to the Spanish drama in view. Yes, you shall be a tinkling heard above a roar, like bells about a tambourine!

ALL THE WOMEN [*in great glee*]. Bravo! . . . Hurry! . . . A mantle! . . . A hood!

JODELET. Let us go!

CYRANO [*to the* FIDDLERS]. You will favor us with a tune, messieurs the violinists!

[*The* FIDDLERS *fall into the train. The lighted candles which furnished the footlights are seized and distributed. The procession becomes a torchlight procession*]

CYRANO. Bravo! Officers, beauty in fancy dress, and, twenty steps ahead . . . [*he takes the position he describes*] I, by myself, under the feather stuck, with her own hand, by Glory, in my hat! Proud as a Scipio trebly Nasica! — It is understood? Formal interdiction to interfere with me! — We are ready? One! Two! Three! Doorkeeper, open the door!

[*The* DOORKEEPER *opens wide the folding door. A picturesque corner of Old Paris appears, bathed in moonlight*]

CYRANO. Ah! . . . Paris floats in dim nocturnal mist. . . . The sloping bluish roofs are washed with moonlight. . . . A setting, exquisite indeed, offers itself for the scene about to be enacted. . . . Yonder, under silvery vapor wreathes, like a mysterious magic mirror, glimmers the Seine. . . . And you shall see what you shall see!

ALL. To the Porte de Nesle!

CYRANO [*standing on the threshold*]. To the Porte de Nesle! [*Before crossing it, he turns to the* SOUBRETTE] Were you not asking, mademoiselle, why upon that solitary rhymster a hundred men were set? [*He draws his sword, and tranquilly*] Because it was well known he is a friend of mine! [*Exit*]

[*To the sound of the violins, by the flickering light of the candles, the procession —* LIGNIÈRE *staggering at the head, the* ACTRESSES *arm in arm with the* OFFICERS, *the* PLAYERS *capering behind, — follows out into the night*]

ACT II

THE COOKSHOP OF POETS

RAGUENEAU'S *shop, vast kitchen at the corner of Rue St.-Honoré and Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, which can be seen at the back, through the glass door, gray in the early dawn.*

At the left, in front, a counter overhung by a wrought-iron canopy from which geese, ducks, white peacocks are hanging. In large china jars, tall nosegays composed of the simpler flowers, mainly sunflowers. On the same side, in the middle distance, an enormous fireplace, in front of which, between huge andirons, each of which supports a small iron pot, roasting meats drip into appropriate pans.

To the right, door in the front wing. In the middle distance, a staircase leading to a loft, the interior of which is seen through open shutters; a spread table lighted by a small Flemish candelabrum, shows it to be an eating-room. A wooden gallery continuing the stairway, suggests other similar rooms to which it may lead.

In the center of the shop, an iron hoop, — which can be lowered by means of a rope, — to which large roasts are hooked.

In the shadow, under the stairway, ovens are glowing. Copper molds and saucepans are shining; spits turning, hams swinging, pastry pyramids showing fair. It is the early beginning of the workday. Bustling of hurried scullions, portly cooks and young cook's-assistants; swarming of caps decorated with hen feathers and guinea-fowl wings. Wicker crates and broad sheets of tin are brought in loaded with brioches and tarts.

There are tables covered with meats and cakes; others, surrounded by chairs, await customers. In a corner, a smaller table, littered with papers. At the rise of the curtain, RAGUENEAU *is discovered seated at this table, writing with an inspired air, and counting upon his fingers.*

FIRST PASTRYCOOK [*bringing in a tall molded pudding*]. Nougat of fruit!

SECOND PASTRYCOOK [*bringing in the dish he names*]. Custard!

THIRD PASTRYCOOK [*bringing in a fowl roasted in its feathers*]. Peacock!

FOURTH PASTRYCOOK [*bringing in a tray of cakes*]. Mince-pies!

FIFTH PASTRYCOOK [*bringing in a deep earthen dish*]. Beef stew!

RAGUENEAU [*laying down his pen, and looking up*]. Daybreak already plates with silver the copper pans! Time, Ragueneau, to smother within thee the singing divinity! The hour of the lute will come anon — now is that of the ladle! [*He rises; speaking to one of the* COOKS] You, sir, be so good as to lengthen this gravy, — it is too thick!

THE COOK. How much?

RAGUENEAU. Three feet. [*Goes further*]

THE COOK. What does he mean?

FIRST PASTRYCOOK. Let me have the tart!

SECOND PASTRYCOOK. The dumpling!

RAGUENEAU [*standing before the fireplace*]. Spread thy wings, Muse, and fly further, that thy lovely eyes may not be reddened at the sordid kitchen fire! [*To one of the* COOKS, *pointing at some small loaves of bread*] You have improperly placed the cleft in those loaves; the cæsura belongs in the middle, — between the hemistiches! [*To another of the* COOKS, *pointing at an unfinished pasty*] This pastry palace requires a roof! [*To a young* COOK'S-APPRENTICE, *who, seated upon the floor, is putting fowls on a spit*] And you, on that long spit, arrange, my son, in pleasing alternation, the modest pullet and the splendid turkey-cock, — even as our wise Malherbe alternated of old the greater with the lesser lines, and so with roasted fowls compose a poem!

ANOTHER APPRENTICE [*coming forward with a platter covered by a napkin*]. Master, in your honor, see what I have baked. . . . I hope you are pleased with it!

RAGUENEAU [*ecstatic*]. A lyre!

THE APPRENTICE. Of pie-crust!

RAGUENEAU [*touched*]. With candied fruits!

THE APPRENTICE. And the strings, see, — of spun sugar!

RAGUENEAU [*giving him money*]. Go, drink my health! [*Catching sight of* LISE *who is entering*] Hush! My wife! . . . Move on, and hide that money. [*To* LISE, *showing her the lyre, with a constrained air*] Fine, is it not?

LISE. Ridiculous! [*She sets a pile of wrapping-paper on the counter*]

RAGUENEAU. Paper bags? Good. Thanks. [*He examines them*] Heavens! My beloved books! The masterpieces of my friends — dismembered, — torn! — to fashion paper bags for penny pies! — Ah, the abominable case is re-enacted of Orpheus and the Mænads!

LISE [*drily*]. And have I not an unquestionable right to make what use I can of the sole payment ever gotten from your paltry scribblers of uneven lines?

RAGUENEAU. Pismire! Forbear to insult those divine, melodious crickets!

LISE. Before frequenting that low crew, my friend, you did not use to call me a Mænad, — no, nor yet a pismire!

RAGUENEAU. Put poems to such a use!

LISE. To that use and no other!

RAGUENEAU. If with poems you do this, I should like to know, Madame, what you do with prose!

[*Two* CHILDREN *have come into the shop*]

RAGUENEAU. What can I do for you, little ones?

FIRST CHILD. Three patties.

RAGUENEAU [*waiting on them*]. There you are! Beautifully browned, and piping hot.

SECOND CHILD. Please, will you wrap them for us?

RAGUENEAU [*starting, aside*]. There goes one of my bags! [*To the* CHILDREN] You want them wrapped, do you? [*He takes one of the paper bags, and as he is about to put in the patties, reads*] "*No otherwise, Ulysses, from Penelope departing. . . .*" Not this one! [*He lays it aside and takes another. At the moment of putting in the patties he reads*] "*Phœbus of the aureate locks . . .*" Not that one! [*Same business*]

LISE [*out of patience*]. Well, what are you waiting for?

RAGUENEAU. Here we are. Here we are. Here we are. [*He takes a third*

bag and resigns himself] The sonnet to Phyllis! . . . It is hard, all the same.

LISE. It is lucky you made up your mind. [*Shrugging her shoulders*] Nicodemus! [*She climbs on a chair and arranges dishes on a sideboard*]

RAGUENEAU [*taking advantage of her back being turned, calls back the* CHILDREN *who had already reached the door*]. Psst! . . . Children! Give me back the sonnet to Phyllis, and you shall have six patties instead of three! [*The* CHILDREN *give back the paper bag, joyfully take the patties and exeunt.* RAGUENEAU *smoothes out the crumpled paper and reads, declaiming*] "*Phyllis!*" . . . Upon that charming name, a grease-spot! . . . "*Phyllis!*" . . .

[*Enter brusquely* CYRANO]

CYRANO. What time is it?

RAGUENEAU [*bowing with eager deference*]. Six o'clock.

CYRANO [*with emotion*]. In an hour! [*He comes and goes in the shop*]

RAGUENEAU [*following him*]. Bravo! I too was witness. . . .

CYRANO. Of what?

RAGUENEAU. Your fight.

CYRANO. Which?

RAGUENEAU. At the Hotel de Bourgogne.

CYRANO [*with disdain*]. Ah, the duel!

RAGUENEAU [*admiringly*]. Yes, — the duel in rhyme.

LISE. He can talk of nothing else.

CYRANO. Let him! . . . It does no harm.

RAGUENEAU [*thrusting with a spit he has seized*]. "*At the last line, I hit!*" "*At the last line I hit!*" — How fine that is! [*With growing enthusiasm*] "*At the last line, I —*"

CYRANO. What time, Ragueneau?

RAGUENEAU [*remaining fixed in the attitude of thrusting, while he looks at the clock*]. Five minutes past six. — "*I hit!*" [*He recovers from his duelling posture*] Oh, to be able to make a ballade!

LISE [*to* CYRANO, *who in passing her counter has absentmindedly shaken hands with her*]. What ails your hand?

CYRANO. Nothing. A scratch.

RAGUENEAU. You have been exposed to some danger?

CYRANO. None whatever.

LISE [*shaking her finger at him*]. I fear that is a fib!

CYRANO. From the swelling of my nose? The fib in that case must have been goodsized. . . . [*In a different tone*] I am expecting some one. If our meeting should not be under the elm out there, leave us alone in here.

RAGUENEAU. But how can I contrive it? My poets shortly will be here . . .

LISE [*ironically*]. For breakfast!

CYRANO. When I sign to you, you will clear the place of them. — What time is it?

RAGUENEAU. It is ten minutes past six.

CYRANO [*seating himself nervously at* RAGUENEAU'S *table and helping himself to paper*]. A pen?

RAGUENEAU [*taking one from behind his ear, and offering it*]. A swan's quill.

A MOUSQUETAIRE [*with enormous moustachios, enters; in a stentorian voice*]. Good morning!

[LISE *goes hurriedly to him, toward the back*]

CYRANO [*turning*]. What is it?

RAGUENEAU. A friend of my wife's, — a warrior, — terrible, from his own report.

CYRANO [*taking up the pen again, and waving* RAGUENEAU *away*]. Chut! . . . [*To himself*] Write to her, . . . fold the letter, . . . hand it to her, . . . and make my escape. . . . [*Throwing down the pen*] Coward! . . . But may I perish if I have the courage to speak to her, . . . to say a single word. . . . [*To* RAGUENEAU] What time is it?

RAGUENEAU. A quarter past six.

CYRANO [*beating his breast*]. A single word of all I carry here! . . . Whereas in writing. . . . [*He takes up the pen again*] Come, let us write it then, in very deed, the love-letter I have written in thought so many times, I have but to lay my soul beside my paper, and copy! [*He writes*]

[*Beyond the glass-door, shadowy, lank, hesitating, shabby forms are seen moving. Enter the* POETS, *clad in black, with hanging hose, sadly mudsplashed*]

LISE [*coming forward, to* RAGUENEAU]. Here they come, your scarecrows.

FIRST POET [*entering, to* RAGUENEAU]. Brother in art! . . .

SECOND POET [*shaking both* RAGUENEAU'S *hands*]. Dear fellow-bard. . . .

THIRD POET. Eagle of pastrycooks, [*sniffs the air*] your eyrie smells divine!

FOURTH POET. Phœbus turned baker!

FIFTH POET. Apollo master-cook!

RAGUENEAU [*surrounded, embraced,*

shaken by the hand]. How at his ease a man feels at once with them!

First Poet. The reason we are late is the crowd at the Porte de Nesle!

Second Poet. Eight ugly ruffians, ripped open with the sword, lie weltering on the pavement.

Cyrano [*raising his head a second*]. Eight? I thought there were only seven. [*Goes on with his letter*]

Ragueneau [*to* Cyrano]. Do you happen to know who is the hero of this event?

Cyrano [*negligently*]. I? . . . No.

Lise [*to the* Mousquetaire]. Do you?

The Mousquetaire [*turning up the ends of his moustache*]. Possibly!

Cyrano [*writing; from time to time he is heard murmuring a word or two*] . . . "I love you . . ."

First Poet. A single man, we were told, put a whole gang to flight!

Second Poet. Oh, it was a rare sight! The ground was littered with pikes, and cudgels . . .

Cyrano [*writing*]. " . . . *Your eyes . . .*"

Third Poet. Hats were strewn as far as the Goldsmiths' square!

First Poet. Sapristi! He must have been a madman of mettle. . . .

Cyrano [*as above*]. " . . . *your lips . . .*"

First Poet. An infuriate giant, the doer of that deed!

Cyrano [*same business*]. " . . . *but when I see you, I come near to swooning with a tender dread . . .*"

Second Poet [*snapping up a tart*]. What have you lately written, Ragueneau?

Cyrano [*same business*]. " . . . *who loves you devotedly . . .*" [*In the act of signing the letter, he stops, rises, and tucks it inside his doublet*] No need to sign it, I deliver it myself.

Ragueneau [*to* Second Poet]. I have rhymed a recipe.

Third Poet [*establishing himself beside a tray of cream puffs*]. Let us hear this recipe!

Fourth Poet [*examining a brioche of which he has possessed himself*]. It should not wear its cap so saucily on one side . . . it scarcely looks well! . . . [*Bites off the top*]

First Poet. See, the spice-cake there, ogling a susceptible poet with eyes of almond under citron brows! . . . [*He takes the spice cake*]

Second Poet. We are listening!

Third Poet [*slightly squeezing a cream puff between his fingers*]. This puff creams at the mouth. . . . I water!

Second Poet [*taking a bite out of the large pastry lyre*]. For once the Lyre will have filled my stomach!

Ragueneau [*who has made ready to recite, has coughed, adjusted his cap, struck an attitude*]. A recipe in rhyme!

Second Poet [*to* First Poet, *nudging him*]. Is it breakfast, with you?

First Poet [*to* Second Poet]. And with you is it dinner?

Ragueneau. *How Almond Cheese-Cakes should be made.*

Briskly beat to lightness due,
Eggs, a few;
With the eggs so beaten, beat —
Nicely strained for this same use, —
Lemon-juice,
Adding milk of almonds, sweet.

With fine pastry dough, rolled flat,
After that,
Line each little scalloped mold;
Round the sides, light-fingered, spread
Marmalade;
Pour the liquid eggy gold,

Into each delicious pit;
Prison it
In the oven, — and, bye and bye,
Almond cheesecakes will in gay
Blond array
Bless your nostril and your eye!

The Poets [*their mouths full*]. Exquisite! . . . Delicious!

One of the Poets [*choking*]. Humph!

[*They go toward the back, eating.* Cyrano, *who has been watching them, approaches* Ragueneau]

Cyrano. While you recite your works to them, have you a notion how they stuff?

Ragueneau [*low, with a smile*]. Yes, I see them . . . without looking, lest they should be abashed. I get a double pleasure thus from saying my verses over: I satisfy a harmless weakness of which I stand convicted, at the same time as giving those who have not fed a needed chance to feed!

Cyrano [*slapping him on the shoulder*]. You, . . . I like you! [Ragueneau *joins his friends.* Cyrano *looks after him; then, somewhat sharply*] Hey, Lise! [Lise, *absorbed in tender conversation with the* Mousquetaire, *starts and*

comes forward toward CYRANO] Is that captain . . . laying siege to you?

LISE [*offended*]. My eyes, sir, have ever held in respect those who meant hurt to my character. . . .

CYRANO. For eyes so resolute . . . I thought yours looked a little languishing!

LISE [*choking with anger*]. But . . .

CYRANO [*bluntly*]. I like your husband. Wherefore, Madame Lise, I say he shall not be sc . . . horned!

LISE. But . . .

CYRANO [*raising his voice so as to be heard by the* MOUSQUETAIRE]. A word to the wise! [*He bows to the* MOUSQUETAIRE, *and after looking at the clock, goes to the door at the back and stands in watch*]

LISE [*to the* MOUSQUETAIRE, *who has simply returned* CYRANO'S *bow*]. Really . . . I am astonished at you. . . . Defy him . . . to his face!

THE MOUSQUETAIRE. To his face, indeed! . . . to his face! . . . [*He quickly moves off.* LISE *follows him*]

CYRANO [*from the door at the back, signaling to* RAGUENEAU *that he should clear the room*]. Pst! . . .

RAGUENEAU [*urging the* POETS *toward the door at the right*]. We shall be much more comfortable in there. . . .

CYRANO [*impatiently*]. Pst! . . . Pst! . . .

RAGUENEAU [*driving along the* POETS]. I want to read you a little thing of mine. . . .

FIRST POET [*despairingly, his mouth full*]. But the provisions. . . .

SECOND POET. Shall not be parted from us!

[*They follow* RAGUENEAU *in procession, after making a raid on the eatables*]

CYRANO. If I feel that there is so much as a glimmer of hope . . . I will out with my letter! . . .

[ROXANE, *masked, appears behind the glass door, followed by the* DUENNA]

CYRANO [*instantly opening the door*]. Welcome! [*Approaching the* DUENNA] Madame, a word with you!

THE DUENNA. A dozen.

CYRANO. Are you fond of sweets?

THE DUENNA. To the point of indigestion!

CYRANO [*snatching some paper bags off the counter*]. Good. Here are two sonnets of Benserade's . . .

THE DUENNA. Pooh!

CYRANO. Which I fill for you with grated almond drops.

THE DUENNA [*with a different expression*]. Ha!

CYRANO. Do you look with favor upon the cate they call a trifle?

THE DUENNA. I affect it out of measure, when it has whipped cream inside.

CYRANO. Six shall be yours, thrown in with a poem by Saint-Amant. And in these verses of Chapelain I place this wedge of fruit-cake, light by the side of them. . . . Oh! And do you like tarts . . . little jam ones . . . fresh?

THE DUENNA. I dream of them at night!

CYRANO [*loading her arms with crammed paper bags*]. Do me the favor to go and eat these in the street.

THE DUENNA. But . . .

CYRANO [*pushing her out*]. And do not come back till you have finished! [*He closes up the door upon her, comes forward toward* ROXANE, *and stands, bareheaded, at a respectful distance*] Blessed forevermore among all hours the hour in which, remembering that so lowly a being still draws breath, you were so gracious as to come to tell me . . . to tell me? . . .

ROXANE [*who has removed her mask*]. First of all, that I thank you. For that churl, that coxcomb yesterday, whom you taught manners with your sword, is the one whom a great nobleman, who fancies himself in love with me . . .

CYRANO. De Guiche?

ROXANE [*dropping her eyes*]. Has tried to force upon me as a husband.

CYRANO. Honorary? [*Bowing*] It appears, then, that I fought, and I am glad of it, not for my graceless nose, but your thrice-beautiful eyes.

ROXANE. Further than that . . . I wished . . . But, before I can make the confession I have in mind to make, I must find in you once more the . . . almost brother, with whom as a child I used to play, in the park — do you remember? — by the lake!

CYRANO. I have not forgotten. Yes . . . you came every summer to Bergerac.

ROXANE. You used to fashion lances out of reeds . . .

CYRANO. The silk of the tasselled corn furnished hair for your doll . . .

ROXANE. It was the time of long delightful games . . .

CYRANO. And somewhat sour berries . . .

ROXANE. The time when you did everything I bade you!

CYRANO. Roxane, wearing short frocks, was known as Magdeleine.

ROXANE. Was I pretty in those days?

CYRANO. You were not ill-looking.

ROXANE. Sometimes, in your venturesome climbings you used to hurt yourself. You would come running to me, your hand bleeding. And, playing at being your mamma, I would harden my voice and say . . . [*She takes his hand*] "Will you never keep out of mischief?" [*She stops short, amazed*] Oh, it is too much! Here you have done it again! [CYRANO *tries to draw back his hand*] No! Let me look at it! . . . Aren't you ashamed? A great boy like you! . . . How did this happen, and where?

CYRANO. Oh, fun . . . near the Porte de Nesle.

ROXANE [*sitting down at a table and dipping her handkerchief into a glass of water*]. Let me have it.

CYRANO [*sitting down too*]. So prettily, so cheeringly maternal!

ROXANE. And tell me, while I wash this naughty blood away . . . with how many were you fighting?

CYRANO. Oh, not quite a hundred.

ROXANE. Tell me about it.

CYRANO. No. What does it matter? You tell me, you . . . what you were going to tell me before, and did not dare . . .

ROXANE [*without releasing his hand*]. I do dare, now. I have breathed in courage with the perfume of the past. Oh, yes, now I dare. Here it is. There is someone whom I love.

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. Oh, he does not know it.

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. As yet. . . .

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. But if he does not know it, he soon will.

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. A poor boy who until now has loved me timidly, from a distance, without daring to speak. . . .

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. No, leave me your hand. It is hot, this will cool it. . . . But I have read his heart in his face.

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE [*completing the bandaging of his hand with her small pocket-handkerchief*]. And, cousin, is it not a strange coincidence — that he should serve exactly in your regiment!

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE [*laughing*]. Yes. He is a cadet, in the same company!

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. He bears plain on his forehead the stamp of wit, of genius! He is proud, noble, young, brave, handsome. . . .

CYRANO [*rising, pale*]. Handsome! . . .

ROXANE. What . . . what is the matter?

CYRANO. With me? . . . Nothing! . . . It is . . . it is . . . [*Showing his hand, smiling*] You know! . . . It smarts a little . . .

ROXANE. In short, I love him. I must tell you, however, that I have never seen him save at the play.

CYRANO. Then you have never spoken to each other?

ROXANE. Only with our eyes.

CYRANO. But, then . . . how can you know? . . .

ROXANE. Oh, under the lindens of Place Royale, people will talk. A trustworthy gossip told me many things!

CYRANO. A cadet, did you say?

ROXANE. A cadet, in your company.

CYRANO. His name?

ROXANE. Baron Christian de Neuvillette.

CYRANO. What? He is not in the cadets.

ROXANE. He is! He certainly is, since morning. Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.

CYRANO. And quickly, quickly, she throws away her heart! . . . But my poor little girl . . .

THE DUENNA [*opening the door at the back*]. Monsieur de Bergerac, I have eaten them, every one!

CYRANO. Now read the poetry printed upon the bags! [*The* DUENNA *disappears*] My poor child, you who can endure none but the choicest language, who savor eloquence and wit, . . . if he should be a barbarian!

ROXANE. No! no! . . . He has hair like one of D'Urfé's heroes!

CYRANO. If he had on proof as homely a wit as he has pretty hair!

ROXANE. No! No! . . . I can see at a single glance, his utterances are fine, pointed . . .

CYRANO. Ah, yes! A man's utterances are invariably like his moustache! . . . Still, if he *were* a ninny? . . .

ROXANE [*stamping with her foot*]. I should die, there!

CYRANO [*after a time*]. You bade me come here that you might tell me this? I scarcely see the appropriateness, Madame.

ROXANE. Ah, it was because someone yesterday let death into my soul by telling me that in your company you are all Gascons, . . . all!

CYRANO. And that we pick a quarrel with every impudent fledgling, not Gascon, admitted by favor to our thoroughbred Gascon ranks? That is what you heard?

ROXANE. Yes, and you can imagine how distracted I am for him!

CYRANO [*in his teeth*]. You well may be!

ROXANE. But I thought, yesterday, when you towered up, great and invincible, giving his due to that miscreant, standing your ground against those caitiffs, I thought, "Were he but willing, he of whom all are in awe . . ."

CYRANO. Very well, I will protect your little baron.

ROXANE. Ah, you will . . . you will protect him for me? . . . I have always felt for you the tenderest regard!

CYRANO. Yes, yes.

ROXANE. You will be his friend?

CYRANO. I will!

ROXANE. And never shall he have to fight a duel?

CYRANO. I swear it.

ROXANE. Oh, I quite love you! . . . Now I must go. [*She hurriedly resumes her mask, throws a veil over her head; says absentmindedly*] But you have not yet told me about last night's encounter. It must have been amazing! . . . Tell him to write to me. [*She kisses her hand to him*] I love you dearly!

CYRANO. Yes, yes.

ROXANE. A hundred men against you? . . . Well, adieu. We are fast friends.

CYRANO. Yes, yes.

ROXANE. Tell him to write me! . . . A hundred men! You shall tell me another time. I must not linger now . . . A hundred men! What a heroic thing to do!

CYRANO [*bowing*]. Oh, I have done better since!

[*Exit* ROXANE. CYRANO *stands motionless, staring at the ground. Silence. The door at the right opens.* RAGUENEAU *thrusts in his head*]

RAGUENEAU. May we come back?

CYRANO [*without moving*]. Yes. . . .

[RAGUENEAU *beckons, his friends come in again. At the same time, in the doorway at the back, appears* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *costume of a Captain of the Guards. On seeing* CYRANO, *he gesticulates exaggeratedly by way of signal to someone out of sight*]

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. He is here!

CYRANO [*looking up*]. Captain!

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX [*exultant*]. Hero! We know all! . . . About thirty of my cadets are out there! . . .

CYRANO [*drawing back*]. But . . .

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX [*trying to lead him off*]. Come! . . . You are in request!

CYRANO. No!

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. They are drinking across the way, at the Cross of the Hilt.

CYRANO. I . . .

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX [*going to the door and shouting toward the street corner, in a stentorian voice*]. The hero refuses. He is not in the humor!

A VOICE [*outside*]. Ah, *sandious!* . . .

[*Tumult outside, noise of clanking swords and of boots drawing nearer*]

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX [*rubbing his hands*]. Here they come, across the street. . . .

THE CADETS [*entering the cookshop*]. *Mille dious!* . . . *Capdedious!* . . . *Mordious!* . . . *Pocapdedious!* . . .

RAGUENEAU [*backing in alarm*]. Messieurs, are you all natives of Gascony?

THE CADETS. All!

ONE OF THE CADETS [*to* CYRANO]. Bravo!

CYRANO. Baron!

OTHER CADET [*shaking both* CYRANO'S *hands*]. Viva!

CYRANO. Baron!

THIRD CADET. Let me hug you to my heart!

CYRANO. Baron!

SEVERAL GASCONS. Let us hug him!

CYRANO [*not knowing which one to answer*]. Baron! . . . baron! . . . your pardon!

RAGUENEAU. Messieurs, are you all barons?

THE CADETS. All!

RAGUENEAU. Are they truly?

FIRST CADET. Our coat of arms piled up would dwindle in the clouds!

LE BRET [*entering, running to* CYRANO]. They are looking for you! A crowd, gone mad as March, led by those who were with you last night.

CYRANO [*alarmed*]. You never told them where to find me? . . .

LE BRET [*rubbing his hands*]. I did.

A BURGHER [*entering, followed by a number of others*]. Monsieur, the Marais is coming in a body!

[*The street outside has filled with people. Sedan-chairs, coaches stop before the door*]

LE BRET [*smiling, low to* CYRANO]. And Roxane?

CYRANO [*quickly*]. Be quiet!

THE CROWD [*outside*]. Cyrano!

[*A rabble bursts into the cookshop. Confusion. Shouting*]

RAGUENEAU [*standing upon a table*]. My shop is invaded! They are breaking everything! It is glorious!

PEOPLE [*pressing round* CYRANO]. My friend . . . my friend. . . .

CYRANO. I had not so many friends . . . yesterday!

LE BRET. This is success!

A YOUNG MARQUIS [*running toward* CYRANO, *with outstretched hands*]. If you knew, my dear fellow . . .

CYRANO. Dear? . . . Fellow? . . . Where was it we stood sentinel together?

OTHER MARQUIS. I wish to present you, sir, to several ladies, who are outside in my coach. . . .

CYRANO [*coldly*]. But you, to me, by whom will you first be presented?

LE BRET [*astonished*]. But what is the matter with you?

CYRANO. Be still!

A MAN OF LETTERS [*with an inkhorn*]. Will you kindly favor me with the details of . . .

CYRANO. No.

LE BRET [*nudging him*]. That is Theophrastus Renaudot, the inventor of the gazette.

CYRANO. Enough!

LE BRET. A sheet close packed with various information! It is an idea, they say, likely to take firm root and flourish!

A POET [*coming forward*]. Monsieur . . .

CYRANO. Another!

THE POET. I am anxious to make a pentacrostic on your name.

SOMEBODY ELSE [*likewise approaching* CYRANO]. Monsieur . . .

CYRANO. Enough, I say!

[*At the gesture of impatience which* CYRANO *cannot repress, the crowd draws away.* DE GUICHE *appears, escorted by officers: among them* CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, *those who followed* CYRANO *at the end of the first act.* CUIGY *hurries toward* CYRANO]

CUIGY [*to* CYRANO]. Monsieur de Guiche! [*Murmurs. Every one draws back*] He comes at the request of the Marshal de Gaussion.

DE GUICHE [*bowing to* CYRANO]. Who wishes to express his admiration for your latest exploit, the fame of which has reached him.

THE CROWD. Bravo!

CYRANO [*bowing*]. The Marshal is qualified to judge of courage.

DE GUICHE. He would scarcely have believed the report, had these gentlemen not been able to swear they had seen the deed performed.

CUIGY. With our own eyes!

LE BRET [*low to* CYRANO, *who wears an abstracted air*]. But . . .

CYRANO. Be silent!

LE BRET. You appear to be suffering . . .

CYRANO [*starting, and straightening himself*]. Before these people? . . . [*His moustache bristles; he expands his chest*] I . . . suffering? . . . You shall see!

DE GUICHE [*in whose ear* CUIGY *has been whispering*]. But this is by no means the first gallant achievement marking your career. You serve in the madcap Gascon company, do you not?

CYRANO. In the cadets, yes.

ONE OF THE CADETS [*in a great voice*]. Among his countrymen!

DE GUICHE [*considering the* GASCONS, *in line behind* CYRANO]. Ah, ha! — All these gentlemen then of the formidable aspect, are the famous . . .

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. Cyrano!

CYRANO. Captain? . . .

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. My company, I believe, is here in total. Be so obliging as to present it to the Count.

CYRANO [*taking a step toward* DE GUICHE, *and pointing at the* CADETS].

They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux;
Famed fighters, liars, desperates,
They are the Gascony Cadets!
All, better-born than pickpockets,
Talk couchant, rampant, . . . pendent, too!
They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux!

Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
Wolf-toothed and heron-legged, they hew
The rabble down that snarls and threats . . .
Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets!
Great pomp of plume hides and offsets
Holes in those hats they wear askew . . .
Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
They drive the snarling mob, and hew!

The mildest of their sobriquets
Are Crack-my-Crown and Run-me-through,
Mad drunk on glory Gascon gets!
These boasters of soft sobriquets
Wherever rapier rapier whets
Are met in punctual rendezvous . . .
The mildest of their sobriquets
Are Crack-my-crown and Run-me-through!

They are the Gascony Cadets
That give the jealous spouse his due!
Lean forth, adorable coquettes,
They are the Gascony Cadets,
With plumes and scarfs and aigulets!
The husband gray may well look blue . . .
They are the Gascony Cadets
That give the jealous spouse his due!

De Guiche [*nonchalantly seated in an armchair which* Ragueneau *has hurriedly brought for him*]. A gentleman provides himself to-day, by way of luxury, with a poet. May I look upon you as mine?

Cyrano. No, your lordship, as nobody's.

De Guiche. My uncle Richelieu yesterday found your spontaneity diverting. I shall be pleased to be of use to you with him.

Le Bret [*dazzled*]. Great God!

De Guiche. I cannot think I am wrong in supposing that you have rhymed a tragedy?

Le Bret [*whispering to* Cyrano]. My boy, your Agrippina will be played!

De Guiche. Take it to him. . . .

Cyrano [*tempted and pleased*]. Really . . .

De Guiche. He has taste in such matters. He will no more than, here and there, alter a word, recast a passage. . . .

Cyrano [*whose face has instantly darkened*]. Not to be considered, monsieur! My blood runs cold at the thought of a single comma added or suppressed.

De Guiche. On the other hand, my dear sir, when a verse finds favor with him, he pays for it handsomely.

Cyrano. He scarcely can pay me as I pay myself, when I have achieved a verse to my liking, by singing it over to myself!

De Guiche. You are proud.

Cyrano. You have observed it?

One of the Cadets [*coming in with a number of disreputable, draggled, tattered hats threaded on his sword*]. Look, Cyrano! at the remarkable feathered game we secured this morning near the Porte de Nesle! The hats of the fugitives!

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. *Spoliæ opimæ!*

All [*laughing*]. Ha! Ha! Ha! . . .

Cuigy. The one who planned that military action, my word! must be proud of it to-day!

Brissaille. Is it known who did it?

De Guiche. I! — [*The laughter stops short*] They had instructions to chastise — a matter one does not attend to in person, — a drunken scribbler. [*Constrained silence*]

The Cadet [*under breath, to* Cyrano, *indicating the hats*]. What can we do with them? They are oily. . . . Make them into a hotch pot?

Cyrano [*taking the sword with the hats, and bowing, as he shakes them off at* De Guiche's *feet*]. Monsieur, if you should care to return them to your friends? . . .

De Guiche [*rises, and in a curt tone*]. My chair and bearers, at once. [*To* Cyrano, *violently*] As for you, sir . . .

A Voice [*in the street, shouting*]. The chairman of Monseigneur the Comte de Guiche!

De Guiche [*who has recovered control over himself, with a smile*]. Have you read Don Quixote?

Cyrano. I have. And at the name of that divine madman, I uncover . . .

De Guiche. My advice to you is to ponder . . .

A Chairman [*appearing at the back*]. The chair is at the door!

De Guiche. The chapter of the windmills.

Cyrano [*bowing*]. Chapter thirteen.

De Guiche. For when a man attacks them, it often happens . . .

Cyrano. I have attacked, am I to infer, a thing that veers with every wind?

De Guiche. That one of their far-reaching canvas arms pitches him down into the mud!

Cyrano. Or up among the stars!

[*Exit* De Guiche. *He is seen getting into his chair. The gentlemen withdraw whispering.* Le Bret *goes to the door with them. The crowd leaves. The* Cadets *remain seated at the right and left at tables where food and drink are brought to them*]

Cyrano [*bowing with a derisive air to those who leave without daring to take leave of him*]. Gentlemen . . . gentlemen . . . gentlemen. . . .

Le Bret [*coming forward, greatly distressed, lifting his hands to Heaven*]. Oh, in what a pretty pair of shoes. . . .

Cyrano. Oh, you! . . . I expect you to grumble!

Le Bret. But yourself, you will agree with me that invariably to cut the throat of opportunity becomes an exaggeration! . . .

Cyrano. Yes. I agree. I do exaggerate.

Le Bret [*triumphant*]. You see, you admit it! . . .

Cyrano. But for the sake of principle, and of example, as well, I think it a good thing to exaggerate as I do!

Le Bret. Could you but leave apart, once in a while, your mousquetaire of a soul, fortune, undoubtedly, fame . . .

Cyrano. And what should a man do? Seek some grandee, take him for patron, and like the obscure creeper clasping a tree-trunk, and licking the bark of that which props it up, attain to height by craft instead of strength? No, I thank you. Dedicate, as they all do, poems to financiers? Wear motley in the humble hope of seeing the lips of a minister distend for once in a smile not ominous of ill? No, I thank you. Eat every day a toad? Be threadbare at the belly with groveling? Have his skin dirty soonest at the knees? Practice feats of dorsal elasticity? No, I thank you. With one hand stroke the goat while with the other he waters the cabbage? Make gifts of senna that counter-gifts of rhubarb may accrue, and indefatigably swing his censer in some beard? No, I thank you. Push himself from lap to lap, become a little great man in a great little circle, propel his ship with madrigals for oars and in his sails the sighs of the elderly ladies? No, I thank you. Get the good editor Sercy to print his verses at proper expense? No, I thank you. Contrive to be nominated Pope in conclaves held by imbeciles in wineshops? No, I thank you. Work to construct a name upon the basis of a sonnet, instead of constructing other sonnets? No, I thank you. Discover talent in tyros, and in them alone? Stand in terror of what gazettes may please to say, and say to himself, "At whatever cost, may I figure in the Paris Mercury!" No, I thank you. Calculate, cringe, peak, prefer making a call to a poem, — petition, solicit, apply? No, I thank you! No, I thank you! No, I thank you! But . . . sing, dream, laugh, loaf, be single, be free, have eyes that look squarely, a voice with a ring; wear, if he chooses, his hat hindside afore; for a yes, for a no, fight a duel or turn a ditty! . . . Work, without concern of fortune or of glory, to accomplish the heart's-desired journey to the moon! Put forth nothing that has not its spring in the very heart, yet, modest, say to himself, "Old man, be satisfied with blossoms, fruits, yea, leaves alone, so they be gathered in your garden and not another man's!" Then, if it happen that to some small extent he triumph, be obliged to render of the glory, to Cæsar, not one jot, but honestly appropriate it all. In short, scorning to be the parasite, the creeper, if even failing to be the oak, rise, not perchance to a great height, . . . but rise alone!

Le Bret. Alone? Good! but not one against all! How the devil did you contract the mania that possesses you for making enemies, always, everywhere?

Cyrano. By seeing you make friends, and smile to those same flocks of friends with a mouth that takes for model an old purse! I wish not to be troubled to return bows in the street, and I exclaim with glee, "An enemy the more!"

Le Bret. This is mental aberration!

Cyrano. I do not dispute it. I am so framed. To displease is my pleasure. I love that one should hate me. Dear friend, if you but knew how much better a man walks under the exciting fire of hostile eyes, and how amused he may become over the spots on his doublet, spattered by Envy and Cowardice! . . . You, the facile friendship wherewith you surround yourself, resembles those wide Italian collars, loose and easy, with a perforated pattern, in which the neck looks like a woman's. They are more comfortable, but of less high

effect; for the brow not held in proud position by any constraint from them, falls to nodding this way and that. . . . But for me every day Hatred starches and flutes the ruff whose stiffness holds the head well in place. Every new enemy is another plait in it, adding compulsion, but adding, as well, a ray: for, similar in every point to the Spanish ruff, Hatred is a bondage, . . . but is a halo, too!

LE BRET [*after a pause; slipping his arm through* CYRANO'S]. To the hearing of all be proud and bitter, . . . but to me, below breath, say simply that she does not love you!

CYRANO [*sharply*]. Not a word!

[CHRISTIAN *has come in and mingled with the* CADETS; *they ignore him; he has finally gone to a little table by himself, where* LISE *waits on him*]

ONE OF THE CADETS [*seated at a table at the back, glass in hand*]. Hey, Cyrano! [CYRANO *turns toward him*] Your story!

CYRANO. Presently! [*He goes toward the back on* LE BRET'S *arm. They talk low*]

THE CADET [*rising and coming toward the front*]. The account of your fight! It will be the best lesson [*stopping in front of the table at which* CHRISTIAN *is sitting*] for this timorous novice!

CHRISTIAN [*looking up*]. . . . Novice?

OTHER CADET. Yes, sickly product of the North!

CHRISTIAN. Sickly?

FIRST CADET [*impressively*]. Monsieur de Neuvillette, it is a good deed to warn you that there is a thing no more to be mentioned in our company than rope in the house of the hanged!

CHRISTIAN. And what is it?

OTHER CADET [*in a terrifying voice*]. Look at me! [*Three times, darkly, he places his finger upon his nose*] You have understood?

CHRISTIAN. Ah, it is the . . .

OTHER CADET. Silence! . . . Never must you so much as breathe that word, or . . . [*He points toward* CYRANO *at the back talking with* LE BRET] You will have him, over there, to deal with!

OTHER CADET [*who, while* CHRISTIAN *was turned toward the first, has noiselessly seated himself on the table behind him*]. Two persons were lately cut off in their pride by him for talking through their noses. He thought it personal.

OTHER CADET [*in a cavernous voice, as he rises from under the table where he had slipped on all fours*]. Not the remotest allusion, ever, to the fatal cartilage, . . . unless you fancy an early grave!

OTHER CADET. A word will do the business! What did I say? . . . A word? . . . A simple gesture! Make use of your pocket-handkerchief, you will shortly have use for your shroud!

[*Silence. All around* CHRISTIAN *watch him, with folded arms. He rises and goes to* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *who, in conversation with an officer, affects to notice nothing*]

CHRISTIAN. Captain!

CARBON [*turning and looking him rather contemptuously up and down*]. Monsieur?

CHRISTIAN. What is the proper course for a man when he finds gentlemen of the South too boastful?

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. He must prove to them that one can be of the North, yet brave. [*He turns his back upon him*]

CHRISTIAN. I am much obliged.

FIRST CADET [*to* CYRANO]. And now, the tale of your adventure!

ALL. Yes, yes, now let us hear!

CYRANO [*coming forward among them*]. My adventure? [*All draw their stools nearer, and sit around him, with craned necks.* CHRISTIAN *sits astride a chair*] Well, then, I was marching to meet them. The moon up in the skies was shining like a silver watch, when suddenly I know not what careful watchmaker having wrapped it in a cottony cloud, there occurred the blackest imaginable night; and, the streets being nowise lighted,—*mordious!*—you could see no further than . . .

CHRISTIAN. Your nose.

[*Silence. Everyone slowly gets up; all look with terror at* CYRANO. *He has stopped short, amazed. Pause*]

CYRANO. Who is that man?

ONE OF THE CADETS [*low*]. He joined this morning.

CYRANO [*taking a step toward* CHRISTIAN]. This morning?

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX [*low*]. His name is Baron de Neuvill . . .

CYRANO [*stopping short*]. Ah, very well. . . . [*He turns pale, then red, gives evidence of another impulse to throw himself upon* CHRISTIAN] I. . . . [*He conquers it, and says in a stifled voice*] Very well. [*He takes up his tale*] As I was

saying . . . [*with a burst of rage*] *Mordious!* . . . [*He continues in a natural tone*] one could not see in the very least. [*Consternation. All resume their seats, staring at one another*] And I was walking along, reflecting that for a very insignificant rogue I was probably about to offend some great prince who would bear me a lasting grudge, that, in brief, I was about to thrust my . . .

CHRISTIAN. Nose . . .

[*All get up.* CHRISTIAN *has tilted his chair and is rocking on the hind legs*]

CYRANO [*choking*]. Finger . . . between the tree and the bark; for the aforesaid prince might be of sufficient power to trip me and throw me . . .

CHRISTIAN. On my nose . . .

CYRANO [*wipes the sweat from his brow*]. But, said I, "Gascony forward! Never falter when duty prompts! Forward, Cyrano!" and, saying this, I advance — when suddenly, in the darkness, I barely avoid a blow . . .

CHRISTIAN. Upon the nose . . .

CYRANO. I ward it . . . and thereupon find myself . . .

CHRISTIAN. Nose to nose . . .

CYRANO [*springing toward him*]. *Ventre-Saint-Gris!* . . . [*All the* GASCONS *rush forward, to see;* CYRANO, *on reaching* CHRISTIAN, *controls himself and proceeds*] . . . with a hundred drunken brawlers, smelling . . .

CHRISTIAN. To the nose's limit . . .

CYRANO [*deathly pale, and smiling*] . . . of garlic and of grease. I leap forward, head lowered . . .

CHRISTIAN. Nose to the wind! . . .

CYRANO. And I charge them. I knock two breathless and run a third through the body. One lets off at me: Paf! and I retort . . .

CHRISTIAN. Pif!

CYRANO [*exploding*]. Death and damnation! Go, — all of you!

[*All the* CADETS *make for the door*]

FIRST CADET. The tiger is roused at last!

CYRANO. All! and leave me with this man.

SECOND CADET. *Bigre!* When we see him again, it will be in the shape of mince-meat!

RAGUENEAU. Mince-meat? . . .

OTHER CADET. In one of your pies.

RAGUENEAU. I feel myself grow white and flabby as a table-napkin!

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. Let us go!

OTHER CADET. Not a smudge of him will be left!

OTHER CADET. What these walls are about to behold gives me gooseflesh to think upon!

OTHER CADET [*closing the door at the right*]. Ghastly! . . . Ghastly!

[*All have left, by the back or the sides, a few up the stairway.* CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *remain face to face, and look at each other a moment*]

CYRANO. Embrace me!

CHRISTIAN. Monsieur . . .

CYRANO. Brave fellow.

CHRISTIAN. But what does this . . .

CYRANO. Very brave fellow. I wish you to.

CHRISTIAN. Will you tell me? . . .

CYRANO. Embrace me, I am her brother.

CHRISTIAN. Whose?

CYRANO. Hers!

CHRISTIAN. What do you mean?

CYRANO. Roxane's!

CHRISTIAN [*running to him*]. Heavens! You, her brother?

CYRANO. Or the same thing: her first cousin.

CHRISTIAN. And she has . . .

CYRANO. Told me everything!

CHRISTIAN. Does she love me?

CYRANO. Perhaps!

CHRISTIAN [*seizing his hands*]. How happy I am, Monsieur, to make your acquaintance! . . .

CYRANO. That is what I call a sudden sentiment!

CHRISTIAN. Forgive me! . . .

CYRANO [*looking at him, laying his hand upon his shoulder*]. It is true that he is handsome, the rascal!

CHRISTIAN. If you but knew, Monsieur, how greatly I admire you! . . .

CYRANO. But all those noses which you . . .

CHRISTIAN. I take them back!

CYRANO. Roxane expects a letter to-night . . .

CHRISTIAN. Alas!

CYRANO. What is the matter?

CHRISTIAN. I am lost if I cease to be dumb!

CYRANO. How is that?

CHRISTIAN. Alas! I am such a dunce that I could kill myself for shame!

CYRANO. But, no . . . no . . . You are surely not a dunce, if you believe you are! Besides, you scarcely attacked me like a dunce.

CHRISTIAN. Oh, it is easy to find

words in mounting to the assault! Indeed, I own to a certain cheap military readiness, but when I am before women, I have not a word to say. . . . Yet their eyes, when I pass by, express a kindness toward me . . .

CYRANO. And do their hearts not express the same when you stop beside them?

CHRISTIAN. No! . . . for I am of those — I recognize it, and am dismayed! — who do not know how to talk of love.

CYRANO. *Tiens!* . . . It seems to me that if Nature had taken more pains with my shape, I should have been of those who do know how to talk of it.

CHRISTIAN. Oh, to be able to express things gracefully!

CYRANO. Oh, to be a graceful little figure of a passing mousquetaire!

CHRISTIAN. Roxane is a précieuse, . . . there is no chance but that I shall be a disillusion to Roxane!

CYRANO [*looking at* CHRISTIAN]. If I had, to express my soul, such an interpreter! . . .

CHRISTIAN [*desperately*]. I ought to have eloquence! . . .

CYRANO [*abruptly*]. Eloquence I will lend you! . . . And you, to me, shall lend all-conquering physical charm . . . and between us we will compose a hero of romance!

CHRISTIAN. What?

CYRANO. Should you be able to say, as your own, things which I day by day would teach you?

CHRISTIAN. You are suggesting? . . .

CYRANO. Roxane shall not have disillusions! Tell me, shall we win her heart, we two as one? will you submit to feel, transmitted from my leather doublet into your doublet stitched with silk, the soul I wish to share?

CHRISTIAN. But Cyrano! . . .

CYRANO. Christian, will you?

CHRISTIAN. You frighten me!

CYRANO. Since you fear, left to yourself, to chill her heart, will you consent, — and soon it will take fire, I vouch for it! — to contribute your lips to my phrases?

CHRISTIAN. Your eyes shine! . . .

CYRANO. Will you?

CHRISTIAN. What, would it please you so much?

CYRANO [*with rapture*]. It would . . . [*remembering, and confining himself to expressing an artistic pleasure*] . . . amuse me! It is an experiment fit surely to tempt a poet. Will you complete me, and let me in exchange complete you? We will walk side by side: you in full light, I in your shadow. . . . I will be wit to you . . . you, to me, shall be good looks!

CHRISTIAN. But the letter, which should be sent to her without delay? . . . Never shall I be able . . .

CYRANO [*taking from his doublet the letter written in the first part of the act*]. The letter? Here it is!

CHRISTIAN. How? . . .

CYRANO. It only wants the address.

CHRISTIAN. I . . .

CYRANO. You can send it without uneasiness. It is a good letter.

CHRISTIAN. You had . . .?

CYRANO. You shall never find us — poets! — without epistles in our pockets to the Chlorises . . . of our imagining! For we are those same that have for mistress a dream blown into the bubble of a name! Take, — you shall convert this feigning into earnest; I was sending forth at random these confessions and laments: you shall make the wandering birds to settle . . . Take it! You shall see . . . I was as eloquent as if I had been sincere! Take, and have done!

CHRISTIAN. But will it not need to be altered in any part? . . . Written without object, will it fit Roxane?

CYRANO. Like a glove!

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

CYRANO. Trust to the blindness of love . . . and vanity! Roxane will never question that it was written for her.

CHRISTIAN. Ah, my friend! [*He throws himself into* CYRANO'S *arms. They stand embraced*]

ONE OF THE CADETS [*opening the door a very little*]. Nothing more . . . The stillness of death . . . I dare not look . . . [*He thrusts in his head*] What is this?

ALL THE CADETS [*entering and seeing* CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *locked in each others arms*]. Ah! . . . Oh! . . .

ONE OF THE CADETS. This passes bounds! [*Consternation*]

THE MOUSQUETAIRE [*impudent*]. *Ouais?*

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. Our demon is waxen mild as an apostle; smitten upon one nostril, he turns the other also!

THE MOUSQUETAIRE. It is in order now to speak of his nose, is it? [*Calling*

Lise, *with a swaggering air*] Hey, Lise! now listen and look. [*Pointedly sniffing the air*] Oh, . . . oh, . . . it is surprising! . . . what an odor! [*Going to* Cyrano] But Monsieur must have smelled it, too? Can you tell me what it is, so plain in the air?

Cyrano [*beating him*]. Why, sundry blows!

[*Joyful antics of the* Cadets *in beholding* Cyrano *himself again*]

ACT III

Roxane's Kiss

A small square in the old Marais. Old-fashioned houses. Narrow streets seen in perspective. At the right, Roxane's *house and the wall of her garden, above which spreading tree-tops. Over the house-door, a balcony and window. A bench beside the doorstep.*

The wall is overclambered by ivy, the balcony wreathed with jasmine.

By means of the bench and projecting stones in the wall, the balcony can easily be scaled.

On the opposite side, old house in the same style of architecture, brick and stone, with entrance-door. The door-knocker is swaddled in linen.

At the rise of the curtain, the Duenna *is seated on the bench. The window on* Roxane's *balcony is wide open.*

Ragueneau, *in a sort of livery, stands near the* Duenna; *he is finishing the tale of his misfortunes, drying his eyes.*

Ragueneau. And then, she eloped with a mousquetaire! Ruined, forsaken, I was hanging myself. I had already taken leave of earth, when Monsieur de Bergerac happening along, unhanged me, and proposed me to his cousin as her steward. . . .

The Duenna. But how did you fall into such disaster?

Ragueneau. Lise was fond of soldiers, I, of poets! Mars ate up all left over by Apollo. Under those circumstances, you conceive, the pantry soon was bare.

The Duenna [*rising and calling toward the open window*]. Roxane, are you ready? . . . They are waiting for us! . . .

Roxane's Voice [*through the window*]. I am putting on my mantle!

The Duenna [*to* Ragueneau, *pointing at the door opposite*]. It is over there, opposite, we are expected. At Clomire's. She holds a meeting in her little place. A disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments is to be read.

Ragueneau. Upon the Softer Sentiments?

The Duenna [*coyly*]. Yes! . . . [*Calling toward the window*] Roxane, you must make haste, or we shall miss the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments!

Roxane's Voice. I am coming!

[*A sound of string-instruments is heard, drawing nearer*]

Cyrano's Voice [*singing in the wings*]. La! la! la! la! la! . . .

The Duenna [*surprised*]. We are to have music?

Cyrano [*enters, followed by two* Pages *with theorbos*]. I tell you it is a demi-semi-quaver! . . . you demi-semi-noddle!

First Page [*ironically*]. Monsieur knows then about quavers, semi and demi?

Cyrano. I know music, as do all Gassendi's disciples!

The Page [*playing and singing*]. La! la!

Cyrano [*snatching the theorbo from him and continuing the musical phrase*]. I can carry on the melody. . . . La, la, la, la . . .

Roxane [*appearing on the balcony*]. It is you?

Cyrano [*singing upon the tune he is continuing*]. I, indeed, who salute your lilies and present my respects to your ro-o-oses! . . .

Roxane. I am coming down! [*She leaves the balcony*]

The Duenna [*pointing at the* Pages]. What is the meaning of these two virtuosi?

Cyrano. A wager I won, from D'Assoucy. We were disputing upon a question of grammar. Yes! No! Yes! No! Suddenly pointing at these two tall knaves, expert at clawing strings, by whom he constantly goes attended, he said, "I wager a day long of music!" He lost. Until therefore the next rise of the sun, I shall have dangling after me these archlute players, harmonious witnesses of all I do! . . . At first I liked it very well, but now it palls a little. [*To the* Musicians] Hey! . . . Go,

from me, to Montfleury, and play him a pavane! . . . [*The* PAGES *go toward the back. To the* DUENNA] I have come to inquire of Roxane, as I do every evening. . . . [*To the* PAGES *who are leaving*] Playing a long time . . . and out of tune! [*To the* DUENNA] . . . whether in the friend of her soul she can still detect no fault?

ROXANE [*coming out of the house*]. Ah, how beautiful he is, what wit he has, how deeply I love him!

CYRANO [*smiling*]. Christian has so much wit? . . .

ROXANE. Cousin, more than yourself!

CYRANO. I grant you.

ROXANE. There is not one alive, I truly believe, more apt at turning those pretty nothings which yet are everything. . . . Sometimes he is of an absent mood, his muse is wool-gathering, then, suddenly, he will say the most enchanting things!

CYRANO [*incredulous*]. Come! . . .

ROXANE. Oh, it is too bad! Men are all alike, narrow, narrow: because he is handsome, he cannot possibly be witty!

CYRANO. So he talks of the heart in acceptable fashion?

ROXANE. Talks, cousin, is feeble. . . . He dissertates!

CYRANO. And writes? . . .

ROXANE. Still better! Listen now to this . . . [*Declaiming*] "*The more of my heart you steal from me the more heart I have!*" [*Triumphantly to* CYRANO] Well? . . .

CYRANO. Pooh!

ROXANE. And to this: "*Since you have stolen my heart, and since I must suffer, to suffer with send me your own!*"

CYRANO. Now he has too much heart, now he has not enough, . . . just what does he want, in the matter of quantity?

ROXANE. You vex me! You are eaten up with jealousy. . . .

CYRANO [*starting*]. *Hein?*

ROXANE. Author's jealousy! And this, could anything be more exquisitely tender? "*Unanimously, believe it, my heart cries out to you, and if kisses could be sent in writing, Love, you should read my letter with your lips. . . .*"

CYRANO [*in spite of himself smiling with satisfaction*]. Ha! Ha! Those particular lines seem to me . . . ho! . . . ho! . . . [*Remembering himself, disdainfully*] . . . puny, pretty . . .

ROXANE. This, then . . .

CYRANO [*delighted*]. You know his letters by heart?

ROXANE. All!

CYRANO. It is flattering, one cannot deny.

ROXANE. In this art of expressing love he is a master!

CYRANO [*modest*]. Oh, . . . a master!

ROXANE [*peremptory*]. A master!

CYRANO. As you please, then . . . a master!

THE DUENNA [*who had gone toward the back, coming quickly forward*]. Monsieur de Guiche! [*To* CYRANO, *pushing him toward the house*] Go in! It is perhaps better that he should not see you here: it might put him on the scent . . .

ROXANE [*to* CYRANO]. Yes, of my dear secret! He loves me, he is powerful, . . . he must not find out! He might cut in sunder our loves . . . with an axe!

CYRANO [*going into the house*]. Very well, very well.

[DE GUICHE *appears*]

ROXANE [*to* DE GUICHE, *with a curtsey*]. I was leaving the house.

DE GUICHE. I have come to bid you farewell.

ROXANE. You are going away?

DE GUICHE. To war.

ROXANE. Ah!

DE GUICHE. I have my orders. Arras is besieged.

ROXANE. Ah! . . . it is besieged?

DE GUICHE. Yes. . . . I see that my departure does not greatly affect you.

ROXANE. Oh! . . .

DE GUICHE. As for me, I own it wrings my heart. Shall I see you again? . . . When? . . . You know that I am made commander-in-general?

ROXANE [*uninterested*]. I congratulate you.

DE GUICHE. Of the Guards.

ROXANE [*starting*]. Ah, . . . of the Guards?

DE GUICHE. Among whom your cousin serves, . . . the man of the boasts and tirades. I shall have opportunity in plenty to retaliate upon him down there.

ROXANE [*suffocating*]. What? The Guards are going down there?

DE GUICHE. Surely. It is my regiment.

ROXANE [*falls sitting upon the bench; aside*]. Christian!

DE GUICHE. What is it troubles you?

ROXANE [*greatly moved*]. This departure . . . grieves me mortally. When one cares for a person . . . to know him away at the war!

DE GUICHE [*surprised and charmed*]. For the first time you utter a kind and feeling word, when I am leaving!

ROXANE [*in a different tone, fanning herself*]. So . . . you are thinking of revenge upon my cousin?

DE GUICHE [*smiling*]. You side with him?

ROXANE. No . . . against him.

DE GUICHE. Do you see much of him?

ROXANE. Very little.

DE GUICHE. He is everywhere to be met with one of the cadets . . . [*trying to remember*] that Neu . . . villen . . . viller . . .

ROXANE. A tall man?

DE GUICHE. Light haired.

ROXANE. Red haired.

DE GUICHE. Good looking.

ROXANE. Pooh!

DE GUICHE. But a fool!

ROXANE. He looks like one. [*In a different tone*] Your vengeance upon Cyrano is then to place him within reach of shot, which is the thing of all he loves! . . . A miserable vengeance! . . . I know, I do, what would more seriously concern him!

DE GUICHE. And that is?

ROXANE. Why . . . that the regiment should march, and leave him behind, with his beloved cadets, arms folded, the whole war through, in Paris! That is the only way to cast down a man like him. You wish to punish him? Deprive him of danger.

DE GUICHE. A woman! A woman! None but a woman could devise a vengeance of the sort!

ROXANE. His friends will gnaw their fists, and he his very soul, with chagrin at not being under fire; and you will be abundantly avenged!

DE GUICHE [*coming nearer*]. Then you do love me a little? [ROXANE *smiles*] I wish to see in this fact of your espousing my grudge a proof of affection, Roxane . . .

ROXANE. . . . You may!

DE GUICHE [*showing several folded papers*]. I have here upon me the orders to be transmitted at once to each of the companies . . . except . . . [*he takes one from among the others*] this one! . . . the company of the cadets. . . . [*He puts it in his pocket*] This, I will keep. [*Laughing*] Ah, ah, ah! Cyrano! his belligerent humor! . . . So you sometimes play tricks upon people, you? . . .

ROXANE. Sometimes.

DE GUICHE [*very near her*]. I love you to distraction! This evening . . . listen, . . . it is true that I must be gone. But to go when I feel that it is a matter for your caring! Listen! . . . There is, not far from here, in Rue Orléans, a convent founded by the Capucins. Father Athanasius. A layman may not enter. But the good fathers . . . I fear no difficulty with them! They will hide me up their sleeve . . . their sleeve is wide. They are the Capucins that serve Richelieu at home. Fearing the uncle, they proportionately fear the nephew. I shall be thought to have left. I will come to you masked. Let me delay by a single day, wayward enchantress!

ROXANE. But if it should transpire . . . your fame . . .

DE GUICHE. Bah!

ROXANE. But . . . the siege . . . Arras! . . .

DE GUICHE. Must wait! Allow me, I beg . . .

ROXANE. No!

DE GUICHE. I beseech!

ROXANE [*tenderly*]. No! Love itself bids me forbid you!

DE GUICHE. Ah!

ROXANE. You must go! [*Aside*] Christian will stay! [*Aloud*] For my sake, be heroic . . . Antony!

DE GUICHE. Ah, heavenly word upon your lips! . . . Then you love the one who . . .

ROXANE. Who shall have made me tremble for his sake . . .

DE GUICHE [*in a transport of joy*]. Ah, I will go! [*He kisses her hand*] Are you satisfied with me?

ROXANE. My friend, I am.

[*Exit* DE GUICHE]

THE DUENNA [*dropping a mocking curtsey toward his back*]. My friend, we are?

ROXANE [*to the* DUENNA]. Not a word of what I have done: Cyrano would never forgive me for defrauding him of his war! [*She calls toward the house*] Cousin! [CYRANO *comes out*] We are going to Clomire's [*She indicates the house opposite*] Alcandre has engaged to speak, and so has Lysimon.

THE DUENNA [*putting her little finger to her ear*]. Yes, but my little finger tells me that we shall be too late to hear them!

CYRANO [*to* ROXANE]. Of all things do not miss the trained monkeys!

[*They have reached* CLOMIRE'S *door*]

THE DUENNA. See! . . . See! they have muffled the doorknocker! [*To the doorknocker*] You have been gagged, that your voice should not disturb the beautiful lecture, . . . little brutal disturber! [*She lifts it with infinite care and knocks softly*]

ROXANE [*seeing the door open*]. Come! [*From the threshold to* CYRANO] If Christian comes, as probably he will, say he must wait!

CYRANO [*hurriedly, as she is about to disappear*]. Ah! [*She turns*] Upon what shall you, according to your custom, question him to-day?

ROXANE. Upon . . .

CYRANO [*eagerly*]. Upon? . . .

ROXANE. But you will be silent . . .

CYRANO. As that wall!

ROXANE. Upon nothing! I will say: Forward! Free rein! No curb! Improvise! Talk of love! Be magnificent!

CYRANO [*smiling*]. Good.

ROXANE. Hush!

CYRANO. Hush!

ROXANE. Not a word! [*She goes in and closes the door*]

CYRANO [*bowing, when the door is closed*]. A thousand thanks!

[*The door opens again and* ROXANE *looks out*]

ROXANE. He might prepare his speeches . . .

CYRANO. Ah, no! . . . the devil, no!

BOTH [*together*]. Hush! . . .

[*The door closes*]

CYRANO [*calling*]. Christian! [*Enter* CHRISTIAN] I know all that we need to. Now make ready your memory. This is your chance to cover yourself with glory. Let us lose no time. Do not look sullen, like that. Quick! Let us go to your lodgings and I will rehearse you . . .

CHRISTIAN. No!

CYRANO. What?

CHRISTIAN. No, I will await Roxane here.

CYRANO. What insanity possesses you? Come quickly and learn . . .

CHRISTIAN. No, I tell you! I am weary of borrowing my letters, my words . . . of playing a part, and living in constant fear. . . . It was very well at first, but now I feel that she loves me. I thank you heartily. I am no longer afraid. I will speak for myself . . .

CYRANO. *Ouais?*

CHRISTIAN. And what tells you that I shall not know how? I am not such an utter blockhead, after all! You shall see! Your lessons have not been altogether wasted. I can shift to speak without your aid! And, that failing, by Heaven! I shall still know enough to take her in my arms! [*Catching sight of* ROXANE *who is coming out from* CLOMIRE'S] She is coming! Cyrano, no, do not leave me! . . .

CYRANO [*bowing to him*]. I will not meddle, Monsieur.

[*He disappears behind the garden wall*]

ROXANE [*coming from* CLOMIRE'S *house with a number of people from whom she is taking leave. Curtseys and farewells*]. Barthénoide! . . . Alcandre! . . . Grémione! . . .

THE DUENNA [*comically desperate*]. We missed the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments! [*She goes into* ROXANE'S *house*]

ROXANE [*still taking leave of this one and that*]. Urimédonte! . . . Goodby!

[*All bow to* ROXANE, *to one another, separate and go off by the various streets.* ROXANE *sees* CHRISTIAN]

ROXANE. You are here! [*She goes to him*] Evening is closing round. . . . Wait! . . . They have all gone. . . . The air is so mild. . . . Not a passer in sight. . . . Let us sit here. . . . Talk! . . . I will listen.

CHRISTIAN [*sits beside her, on the bench. Silence*]. I love you.

ROXANE [*closing her eyes*]. Yes. Talk to me of love.

CHRISTIAN. I love you.

ROXANE. Yes. That is the theme. Play variations upon it.

CHRISTIAN. I love . . .

ROXANE. Variations!

CHRISTIAN. I love you so much . . .

ROXANE. I do not doubt it. What further? . . .

CHRISTIAN. And further . . . I should be so happy if you loved me! Tell me, Roxane, that you love me . . .

ROXANE [*pouting*]. You proffer cider to me when I was hoping for champagne! . . . Now tell me a little *how* you love me?

CHRISTIAN. Why . . . very, very much.

ROXANE. Oh! . . . unravel, disentangle your sentiments!

CHRISTIAN. Your throat! . . . I want to kiss it! . . .

ROXANE. Christian!

CHRISTIAN. I love you! . . .

ROXANE [*attempting to rise*]. Again! . . .

CHRISTIAN [*hastily, holding her back*]. No, I do not love you! . . .

ROXANE [*sitting down again*]. That is fortunate!

CHRISTIAN. I adore you!

ROXANE [*rising and moving away*]. Oh! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes, . . . love makes me into a fool!

ROXANE [*drily*]. And I am displeased at it! as I should be displeased at your no longer being handsome.

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

ROXANE. Go, and rally your routed eloquence!

CHRISTIAN. I . . .

ROXANE. You love me. I have heard it. Good evening. [*She goes toward the house*]

CHRISTIAN. No, no, not yet! . . . I wish to tell you . . .

ROXANE [*pushing open the door to go in*]. That you adore me. Yes, I know. No! No! Go away! . . . Go! . . . Go! . . .

CHRISTIAN. But I . . .

[*She closes the door in his face*]

CYRANO [*who has been on the scene a moment, unnoticed*]. Unmistakably a success.

CHRISTIAN. Help me!

CYRANO. No, sir, no.

CHRISTIAN. I will go kill myself if I am not taken back into favor at once . . . at once!

CYRANO. And how can I . . . how, the devil? . . . make you learn on the spot . . .

CHRISTIAN [*seizing him by the arm*]. Oh, there! . . . Look! . . . See!

[*Light has appeared in the balcony window*]

CYRANO [*with emotion*]. Her window!

CHRISTIAN. Oh, I shall die!

CYRANO. Not so loud!

CHRISTIAN [*in a whisper*]. I shall die!

CYRANO. It is a dark night. . . .

CHRISTIAN. Well?

CYRANO. All may be mended. But you do not deserve . . . There! stand there, miserable boy! . . . in front of the balcony! I will stand under it and prompt you.

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

CYRANO. Do as I bid you!

THE PAGES [*reappearing at the back, to* CYRANO]. Hey!

CYRANO. Hush! [*He signs to them to lower their voices*]

FIRST PAGE [*in a lower voice*]. We have finished serenading Montfleury!

CYRANO [*low, quickly*]. Go and stand out of sight. One at this street corner, the other at that; and if any one comes near, play! . . .

SECOND PAGE. What sort of tune, Monsieur the Gassendist?

CYRANO. Merry if it be a woman, mournful if it be a man. [*The* PAGES *disappear, one at each street corner. To* CHRISTIAN] Call her!

CHRISTIAN. Roxane!

CYRANO [*picking up pebbles and throwing them at the window-pane*]. Wait! A few pebbles . . .

ROXANE [*opening the window*]. Who is calling me?

CHRISTIAN. It is I . . .

ROXANE. Who is . . . I?

CHRISTIAN. Christian!

ROXANE [*disdainfully*]. Oh, you!

CHRISTIAN. I wish to speak with you.

CYRANO [*under the balcony, to* CHRISTIAN]. Speak low! . . .

ROXANE. No, your conversation is too common. You may go home!

CHRISTIAN. In mercy! . . .

ROXANE. No . . . you do not love me any more!

CHRISTIAN [*whom* CYRANO *is prompting*]. You accuse me . . . just Heaven! of loving you no more . . . when I can love you no more!

ROXANE [*who was about to close her window, stopping*]. Ah, that is a little better!

CHRISTIAN [*same business*]. To what a . . . size has Love grown in my . . . sigh-rocked soul which the . . . cruel cherub has chosen for his cradle!

ROXANE [*stepping nearer to the edge of the balcony*]. That is distinctly better! . . . But, since he is so cruel, this Cupid, you were unwise not to smother him in his cradle!

CHRISTIAN [*same business*]. I tried to, but, Madame, the . . . attempt was futile. This . . . new-born Love is . . . a little Hercules. . . .

ROXANE. Much, much better!

CHRISTIAN [*same business*]. . . . Who found it merest baby-play to . . . strangle the serpents . . . twain, Pride and . . . Mistrust.

ROXANE [*leaning her elbows on the balcony-rail*]. Ah, that is very good indeed!

. . . But why do you speak so slowly and stintedly? Has your imagination gout in its wings?

CYRANO [*drawing* CHRISTIAN *under the balcony, and taking his place*]. Hush! It is becoming too difficult!

ROXANE. To-night your words come falteringly. . . . Why is it?

CYRANO [*talking low like* CHRISTIAN]. Because of the dark. They have to grope to find your ear.

ROXANE. My words do not find the same difficulty.

CYRANO. They reach their point at once? Of course they do! That is because I catch them with my heart. My heart, you see, is very large, your ear particularly small. . . . Besides, your words drop . . . that goes quickly; mine have to climb . . . and that takes longer!

ROXANE. They have been climbing more nimbly, however, in the last few minutes.

CYRANO. They are becoming used to this gymnastic feat!

ROXANE. It is true that I am talking with you from a very mountain top!

CYRANO. It is sure that a hard word dropped from such a height upon my heart would shatter it!

ROXANE [*with the motion of leaving*]. I will come down.

CYRANO [*quickly*]. Do not!

ROXANE [*pointing at the bench at the foot of the balcony*]. Then do you get up on the seat! . . .

CYRANO [*drawing away in terror*]. No!

ROXANE. How do you mean . . . no?

CYRANO [*with ever-increasing emotion*]. Let us profit a little by this chance of talking softly together without seeing each other . . .

ROXANE. Without seeing each other? . . .

CYRANO. Yes, to my mind, delectable! Each guesses at the other, and no more. You discern but the trailing blackness of a mantle, and I a dawn-grey glimmer which is a summer gown. I am a shadow merely, a pearly phantom are you! You can never know what these moments are to me! If ever I was eloquent . . .

ROXANE. You were!

CYRANO. My words never till now surged from my very heart . . .

ROXANE. And why?

CYRANO. Because, till now, they must strain to reach you through . . .

ROXANE. What?

CYRANO. Why, the bewildering emotion a man feels who sees you, and whom you look upon! . . . But this evening, it seems to me that I am speaking to you for the first time!

ROXANE. It is true that your voice is altogether different.

CYRANO [*coming nearer, feverishly*]. Yes, altogether different, because, protected by the dark, I dare at last to be myself. I dare . . . [*He stops, and distractedly*] What was I saying? . . . I do not know. . . . All this . . . forgive my incoherence! . . . is so delicious . . . is so new to me!

ROXANE. So new? . . .

CYRANO [*in extreme confusion, still trying to mend his expressions*]. So new . . . yes, new, to be sincere; the fear of being mocked always constrains my heart . . .

ROXANE. Mocked . . . for what?

CYRANO. Why, . . . for its impulses, its flights! . . . Yes, my heart always cowers behind the defence of my wit. I set forth to capture a star . . . and then, for dread of laughter, I stop and pick a flower . . . of rhetoric!

ROXANE. That sort of flower has its pleasing points . . .

CYRANO. But yet, to-night, let us scorn it!

ROXANE. Never before had you spoken as you are speaking! . . .

CYRANO. Ah, if far from Cupid-darts and quivers, we might seek a place of somewhat fresher things! If instead of drinking, flat sip by sip, from a chiselled golden thimble, drops distilled and dulcified, we might try the sensation of quenching the thirst of our souls by stooping to the level of the great river, and setting our lips to the stream!

ROXANE. But yet, wit . . . fancy . . . delicate conceits. . . .

CYRANO. I gave my fancy leave to frame conceits, before, to make you linger, . . . but now it would be an affront to this balm-breathing night, to Nature and the hour, to talk like characters in a pastoral performed at Court! . . . Let us give Heaven leave, looking at us with all its earnest stars, to strip us of disguise and artifice: I fear, . . . oh, fear! . . . lest in our mistaken alchemy sentiment should be subtilized to evaporation; lest the life of the heart should waste in these empty pastimes, and the final refinement of the fine be the undoing of the refined!

ROXANE. But yet, wit, . . . aptness, . . . ingenuity . . .

CYRANO. I hate them in love! Criminal, when one loves, to prolong overmuch that paltry thrust and parry! The moment, however, comes inevitably, — and I pity those for whom it never comes! — in which, we apprehending the noble depth of the love we harbor, a shallow word hurts us to utter!

ROXANE. If . . . if, then, that moment has come for us two, what words will you say to me?

CYRANO. All those, all those, all those that come to me! Not in formal nosegay order, . . . I will throw them you in a wild sheaf! I love you, choke with love, I love you, dear. . . . My brain reels, I can bear no more, it is too much. . . . Your name is in my heart the golden clapper in a bell; and as I know no rest, Roxane, always the heart is shaken, and ever rings your name! . . . Of you, I remember all, all have I loved! Last year, one day, the twelfth of May, in going out at morning you changed the fashion of your hair. . . . I have taken the light of your hair for my light, and as having stared too long at the sun, on everything one sees a scarlet wheel, on everything when I come from my chosen light, my dazzled eye sets swimming golden blots! . . .

ROXANE [*in a voice unsteady with emotion*]. Yes . . . this is love . . .

CYRANO. Ah, verily! The feeling which invades me, terrible and jealous, is love . . . with all its mournful frenzy! It is love, yet self-forgetting more than the wont of love! Ah, for your happiness now readily would I give mine, though you should never know it, might I but, from a distance, sometimes, hear the happy laughter bought by my sacrifice! Every glance of yours breeds in me new strength, new valor! Are you beginning to understand? Tell me, do you grasp my love's measure? Does some little part of my soul make itself felt of you there in the darkness? . . . Oh, what is happening to me this evening is too sweet, too deeply dear! I tell you all these things, and you listen to me, you! Not in my least modest hoping did I ever hope so much! I have now only to die! It is because of words of mine that she is trembling among the dusky branches! For you are trembling, like a flower among leaves! Yes, you tremble, . . . for whether you will or no, I have felt the worshipped trembling of your hand all along this thrilled and blissful jasmine-bough! [*He madly kisses the end of a pendent bough*]

ROXANE. Yes, I tremble . . . and weep . . . and love you . . . and am yours! . . . For you have carried me away . . . away! . . .

CYRANO. Then, let death come! I have moved you, I! . . . There is but one thing more I ask . . .

CHRISTIAN [*under the balcony*]. A kiss!

ROXANE [*drawing hastily back*]. What?

CYRANO. Oh!

ROXANE. You ask? . . .

CYRANO. Yes . . . I . . . [*To* CHRISTIAN]. You are in too great haste!

CHRISTIAN. Since she is so moved, I must take advantage of it!

CYRANO [*to* ROXANE]. I . . . Yes, it is true I asked . . . but, merciful heavens! . . . I knew at once that I had been too bold.

ROXANE [*a shade disappointed*]. You insist no more than so?

CYRANO. Indeed, I insist . . . without insisting! Yes! yes! but your modesty shrinks! . . . I insist, but yet . . . the kiss I begged . . . refuse it me!

CHRISTIAN [*to* CYRANO, *pulling at his mantle*]. Why?

CYRANO. Hush, Christian!

ROXANE [*bending over the balcony-rail*]. What are you whispering?

CYRANO. Reproaches to myself for having gone too far; I was saying "Hush, Christian!" [*The theorbos are heard playing*] Your pardon! . . . a second! . . . Someone is coming!

[ROXANE *closes the window.* CYRANO *listens to the theorbos, one of which plays a lively, and the other a lugubrious tune*]

CYRANO. A dance? . . . A dirge? What do they mean? Is it a man or a woman? . . . Ah, it is a monk!

[*Enter a* CAPUCIN MONK *who goes from house to house, with a lantern, examining the doors*]

CYRANO [*to the* CAPUCIN]. What are you looking for, Diogenes?

THE CAPUCIN. I am looking for the house of Madame . . .

CHRISTIAN. He is in the way!

THE CAPUCIN. Magdeleine Robin . . .

CYRANO [*pointing up one of the streets*]. This way! . . . Straight ahead . . . go straight ahead . . .

THE CAPUCIN. I thank you. I will say ten Aves for your peace. [*Exit*]

CYRANO. My good wishes speed your cowl! [*He comes forward toward* CHRISTIAN]

CHRISTIAN. Insist upon the kiss! . . .

CYRANO. No, I will not!

CHRISTIAN. Sooner or later . . .

CYRANO. It is true! It must come, the moment of inebriation when your lips shall imperiously be impelled toward each other, because the one is fledged with youthful gold and the other is so soft a pink! . . . [*To himself*] I had rather it should be because . . . [*Sound of the window reopening;* CHRISTIAN *hides under the balcony*]

ROXANE [*stepping forward on the balcony*]. Are you there? We were speaking of . . . of . . . of a . . .

CYRANO. Kiss. The word is sweet. Why does your fair lip stop at it? If the mere word burns it, what will be of the thing itself? Do not make it into a fearful matter, and then fear! Did you not a moment ago insensibly leave playfulness behind and slip without trepidation from a smile to a sigh, from a sigh to a tear? Slip but a little further in the same blessed direction: from a tear to a kiss there is scarcely a dividing shiver!

ROXANE. Say no more!

CYRANO. A kiss! When all is said, what is a kiss? An oath of allegiance taken in closer proximity, a promise more precise, a seal on a confession, a rose-red dot upon the letter i in loving; a secret which elects the mouth for ear; an instant of eternity murmuring like a bee; balmy communion with a flavor of flowers; a fashion of inhaling each other's heart, and of tasting, on the brink of the lips, each other's soul!

ROXANE. Say no more . . . no more!

CYRANO. A kiss, Madame, is a thing so noble that the Queen of France, on the most fortunate of lords, bestowed one, did the queen herself!

ROXANE. If that be so . . .

CYRANO [*with increasing fervor*]. Like Buckingham I have suffered in long silence, like him I worship a queen, like him I am sorrowful and unchanging . . .

ROXANE. Like him you enthrall through the eyes the heart that follows you!

CYRANO [*to himself, sobered*]. True, I am handsome . . . I had forgotten!

ROXANE. Come then and gather it, the supreme flower . . .

CYRANO [*pushing* CHRISTIAN *toward the balcony*]. Go!

ROXANE. . . . tasting of the heart.

CYRANO. Go! . . .

ROXANE. . . . murmuring like a bee . . .

CYRANO. Go!

CHRISTIAN [*hesitating*]. But now I feel as if I ought not!

ROXANE. . . . making Eternity an instant . . .

CYRANO [*pushing* CHRISTIAN]. Scale the balcony, you donkey!

[CHRISTIAN *springs toward the balcony, and climbs by means of the bench, the vine, the posts and balusters*]

CHRISTIAN. Ah, Roxane! [*He clasps her to him, and bends over her lips*]

CYRANO. Ha! . . . What a turn of the screw to my heart! . . . Kiss, banquet of Love at which I am Lazarus, a crumb drops from your table even to me, here in the shade. . . . Yes, in my outstretched heart a little falls, as I feel that upon the lip pressing her lip Roxane kisses the words spoken by me! . . . [*The theorbos are heard*] A merry tune . . . a mournful one . . . The monk! [*He goes through the pretence of arriving on the spot at a run, as if from a distance; calling*] Ho, there!

ROXANE. What is it?

CYRANO. It is I. I was passing this way. Is Christian there?

CHRISTIAN [*astonished*]. Cyrano!

ROXANE. Good evening, cousin!

CYRANO. Cousin, good evening!

ROXANE. I will come down.

[ROXANE *disappears in the house.* THE CAPUCIN *re-enters at the back*]

CHRISTIAN [*seeing him*]. Oh, again! [*He follows* ROXANE]

THE CAPUCIN. It is here she lives, I am certain . . . Magdeleine Robin.

CYRANO. You said Ro-lin.

THE CAPUCIN. No, bin, . . . b, i, n, bin!

ROXANE [*appearing upon the threshold, followed by* RAGUENEAU *carrying a lantern, and* CHRISTIAN]. What is it?

THE CAPUCIN. A letter.

CHRISTIAN. What?

THE CAPUCIN [*to* ROXANE]. Oh, the contents can be only of a sacred character! It is from a worthy nobleman who . . .

ROXANE [*to* CHRISTIAN]. It is from De Guiche!

CHRISTIAN. He dares to . . .?

ROXANE. Oh, he will not trouble me much longer! [*Opening the letter*] I

love you, and if . . . [*By the light of* RAGUENEAU'S *lantern she reads, aside, low*] Mademoiselle: The drums are beating. My regiment is buckling on its corselet. It is about to leave. I am thought to have left already, but lag behind. I am disobeying you. I am in the convent here. I am coming to you, and send you word by a friar, silly as a sheep, who has no suspicion of the import of this letter. You smiled too sweetly upon me an hour ago: I must see you smile again. Provide to be alone, and deign graciously to receive the audacious worshipper, forgiven already, I can but hope, who signs himself your—etc. . . . [*To* THE CAPUCIN] Father, this is what the letter tells me. . . . Listen: [*All draw nearer; she reads aloud*] Mademoiselle: The wishes of the cardinal may not be disregarded, however hard compliance with them prove. I have therefore chosen as bearer of this letter a most reverend, holy, and sagacious Capucin; it is our wish that he should at once, in your own dwelling, pronounce the nuptial blessing over you. Christian must secretly become your husband. I send him to you. You dislike him. Bow to Heaven's will in resignation, and be sure that it will bless your zeal, and sure, likewise, Mademoiselle, of the respect of him who is and will be ever your most humble and . . . etc.

THE CAPUCIN [*beaming*]. The worthy gentleman! . . . I knew it! You remember that I said so: The contents of that letter can be only of a sacred character!

ROXANE [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. I am a fluent reader, am I not?

CHRISTIAN. H'm!

ROXANE [*with feigned despair*]. Ah . . . it is horrible!

THE CAPUCIN [*who has turned the light of his lantern upon* CYRANO]. You are the one?

CHRISTIAN. No, I am.

THE CAPUCIN [*turning the light upon him, and as if his good looks aroused suspicion*]. But . . .

ROXANE [*quickly*]. Postscript: You will bestow upon the convent two hundred and fifty crowns.

THE CAPUCIN. The worthy, worthy gentleman! [*To* ROXANE] Be reconciled!

ROXANE [*with the expression of a martyr*]. I will endeavor! [*While* RAGUENEAU *opens the door for* THE CAPUCIN, *whom* CHRISTIAN *is showing into the house,* ROXANE *says low to* CYRANO] De Guiche is coming! . . . Keep him here! Do not let him enter until . . .

CYRANO. I understand! [*To the* CAPUCIN] How long will it take to marry them?

THE CAPUCIN. A quarter of an hour.

CYRANO [*pushing all toward the house*]. Go in! I shall be here!

ROXANE [*to* CHRISTIAN]. Come! [*They go in*]

CYRANO. How can I detain De Guiche for a quarter of an hour? [*He jumps upon the bench, climbs the wall toward the balcony rail*] So! . . . I climb up here! . . . I know what I will do! . . . [*The theorbos play a melancholy tune*] Ho, it is a man! [*The tune quavers lugubriously*] Ho, ho, this time there is no mistake! [*He is on the balcony; he pulls the brim of his hat over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps his cloak about him, and bends over the balcony-rail*] No, it is not too far! [*He climbs over the balcony-rail, and, reaching for a long bough that projects beyond the garden wall, holds on to it with both hands, ready to let himself drop*] I shall make a slight commotion in the atmosphere!

DE GUICHE [*enters masked, groping in the dark*]. What can that thrice-damned Capucin be about?

CYRANO. The devil! if he should recognize my voice! [*Letting go with one hand, he makes show of turning a key*] Cric! crac! [*Solemnly*] Cyrano, resume the accent of Bergerac!

DE GUICHE [*looking at* ROXANE'S *house*]. Yes, that is it. I can scarcely see. This mask bothers my eyes! [*He is about to enter* ROXANE'S *house;* CYRANO *swings from the balcony, holding on to the bough, which bends and lets him down between the door and* DE GUICHE. *He intentionally drops very heavily, to give the effect of dropping from a great height, and lies flattened upon the ground, motionless, as if stunned*]

DE GUICHE. What is it? [*When he looks up, the bough has swung into place; he sees nothing but the sky*] Where did this man drop from?

CYRANO [*rising to a sitting posture*]. From the moon!

DE GUICHE. From the . . . ?

CYRANO [*in a dreamy voice*]. What time is it?

DE GUICHE. Has he gone mad?

CYRANO. What time? What country? What day? What season?

DE GUICHE. But . . .

CYRANO. I am dazed!

DE GUICHE. Monsieur . . .

CYRANO. I have dropped from the moon like a bomb!

DE GUICHE [*impatiently*]. What are you babbling about?

CYRANO [*rising, in a terrible voice*]. I tell you I have dropped from the moon!

DE GUICHE [*backing a step*]. Very well. You have dropped from the moon! . . . He is perhaps a lunatic!

CYRANO [*walking up close to him*]. Not metaphorically, mind that!

DE GUICHE. But . . .

CYRANO. A hundred years ago, or else a minute, — for I have no conception how long I have been falling, — I was up there, in that saffron-colored ball!

DE GUICHE [*shrugging his shoulders*]. You were. Now, let me pass!

CYRANO [*standing in his way*]. Where am I? Be frank with me! Keep nothing from me! In what region, among what people, have I been shot like an aerolite?

DE GUICHE. I wish to pass!

CYRANO. While falling I could not choose my way, and have no notion where I have fallen! Is it upon a moon, or is it upon an earth, I have been dragged by my posterior weight?

DE GUICHE. I tell you, sir . . .

CYRANO [*with a scream of terror at which* DE GUICHE *starts backward a step*]. Great God! . . . In this country men's faces are soot-black!

DE GUICHE [*lifting his hand to his face*]. What does he mean?

CYRANO [*still terrified*]. Am I in Algeria? Are you a native? . . .

DE GUICHE [*who has felt his mask*]. Ah, my mask!

CYRANO [*pretending to be easier*]. So I am in Venice! . . . Or am I in Genoa?

DE GUICHE [*attempting to pass*]. A lady is expecting me!

CYRANO [*completely reassured*]. Ah, then I am in Paris.

DE GUICHE [*smiling in spite of himself*]. The rogue is not far from amusing!

CYRANO. Ah, you are laughing!

DE GUICHE. I laugh . . . but intend to pass!

CYRANO [*beaming*]. To think I should strike Paris! [*Quite at his ease, laughing, brushing himself, bowing*] I arrived — pray, pardon my appearance! — by the last whirlwind. I am rather unpresentable — Travel, you know! My eyes are still full of star-dust. My spurs are clogged with bristles off a planet. [*Appearing to pick something off his sleeve*] See, on my sleeve, a comet's hair! [*He makes a feint of blowing it away*]

DE GUICHE [*beside himself*]. Sir . . .

CYRANO [*as* DE GUICHE *is about to pass, stretching out his leg as if to show something on it, thereby stopping him*]. Embedded in my calf, I have brought back one of the Great Bear's teeth . . . and as, falling too near the Trident, I strained aside to clear one of its prongs, I landed sitting in Libra, . . . yes, one of the scales! . . . and now my weight is registered up there! [*Quickly preventing* DE GUICHE *from passing, and taking hold of a button on his doublet*] And if, Monsieur, you should take my nose between your fingers and compress it . . . milk would result!

DE GUICHE. What are you saying? Milk? . . .

CYRANO. Of the Milky Way.

DE GUICHE. Go to the devil!

CYRANO. No! I am sent from Heaven, literally. [*Folding his arms*] Will you believe — I discovered it in passing — that Sirius at night puts on a night-cap? [*Confidentially*] The lesser Bear is too little yet to bite. . . . [*Laughing*] I tumbled plump through Lyra, and snapped a string! . . . [*Magnificent*] But I intend setting all this down in a book, and the golden stars I have brought back caught in my shaggy mantle, when the book is printed, will be seen serving as asterisks!

DE GUICHE. I have stood this long enough! I want . . .

CYRANO. I know perfectly what you want!

DE GUICHE. Man . . .

CYRANO. You want to know, from me, at first hand, what the moon is made of, and whether that monumental pumpkin is inhabited?

DE GUICHE [*shouting*]. Not in the very least! I want . . .

CYRANO. To know how I got there? I got there by a method of my own invention.

DE GUICHE [*discouraged*]. He is mad! . . . stark!

CYRANO [*disdainfully*]. Do not imagine that I resorted to anything so absurd as Regiomontanus's eagle, or anything so lacking in enterprise as Archytas's pigeon! . . .

De Guiche. The madman is erudite. . . .

Cyrano. I drew up nothing that had ever been thought of before! [De Guiche *has succeeded in getting past* Cyrano, *and is nearing* Roxane's *door;* Cyrano *follows him, ready to buttonhole him*] I invented no less than six ways of storming the blue fort of Heaven!

De Guiche [*turning around*]. Six, did you say?

Cyrano [*volubly*]. One way was to stand naked in the sunshine, in a harness thickly studded with glass phials, each filled with morning dew. The sun in drawing up the dew, you see, could not have helped drawing me up too!

De Guiche [*surprised, taking a step toward* Cyrano]. True. That is one!

Cyrano [*taking a step backward, with a view to drawing* De Guiche *away from the door*]. Or else, I could have let the wind into a cedar coffer, then rarified the imprisoned element by means of cunningly adjusted burning-glasses, and soared up with it!

De Guiche [*taking another step toward* Cyrano]. Two!

Cyrano [*backing*]. Or else, mechanic as well as artificer, I could have fashioned a giant grasshopper, with steel joints, which, impelled by successive explosions of saltpeter, would have hopped with me to the azure meadows where graze the starry flocks!

De Guiche [*unconsciously following* Cyrano, *and counting on his fingers*]. That makes three!

Cyrano. Since smoke by its nature ascends, I could have blown into an appropriate globe a sufficient quantity to ascend with me!

De Guiche [*as above, more and more astonished*]. Four!

Cyrano. Since Phœbe, the moon-goddess, when she is at wane, is greedy, O beeves! of your marrow, . . . with that marrow have besmeared myself!

De Guiche [*amazed*]. Five!

Cyrano [*who while talking has backed, followed by* De Guiche, *to the further side of the square, near a bench*]. Or else, I could have placed myself upon an iron plate, have taken a magnet of suitable size, and thrown it in the air! That way is a very good one! The magnet flies upward, the iron instantly after; the magnet no sooner overtaken than you fling it up again. . . . The rest is clear! You can go upward indefinitely.

De Guiche. Six! . . . But here are six excellent methods! Which of the six, my dear sir, did you select?

Cyrano. A seventh!

De Guiche. Did you, indeed? And what was that?

Cyrano. I give you a hundred guesses!

De Guiche. I must confess that I should like to know!

Cyrano [*imitating the noise of the surf, and making great mysterious gestures*]. Hoo-ish! hoo-ish!

De Guiche. Well! What is that?

Cyrano. Cannot you guess?

De Guiche. No!

Cyrano. The tide! . . . At the hour in which the moon attracts the deep, I lay down upon the sands, after a sea-bath . . . and, my head being drawn up first, — the reason of this, you see, that the hair will hold a quantity of water in its mop! — I rose in the air, straight, beautifully straight, like an angel. I rose . . . I rose softly . . . without an effort . . . when, suddenly, I felt a shock. Then . . .

De Guiche [*lured on by curiosity, taking a seat on the bench*]. Well, . . . then?

Cyrano. Then . . . [*resuming his natural voice*] The time is up, Monsieur, and I release you. They are married.

De Guiche [*getting to his feet with a leap*]. I am dreaming or drunk! That voice? [*The door of* Roxane's *house opens; lackeys appear carrying lighted candelabra.* Cyrano *removes his hat*] And that nose! . . . Cyrano!

Cyrano [*bowing*]. Cyrano. They have exchanged rings within the quarter of the hour.

De Guiche. Who have? [*He turns round. Tableau. Behind the lackey stand* Roxane *and* Christian *holding hands.* The Capucin *follows them smiling.* Ragueneau *holds high a flambeau.* The Duenna *closes the procession, bewildered, in her bedgown*] Heavens! [*To* Roxane] You! [*Recognizing* Christian *with amazement*] He? [*Bowing to* Roxane] Your astuteness compels my admiration! [*To* Cyrano] My compliments to you, ingenious inventor of flying machines. Your experiences would have beguiled a saint on the threshold of Paradise! Make a note of them. . . . They can be used again, with profit, in a book!

Cyrano [*bowing*]. I will confidently follow your advice.

The Capucin [*to* De Guiche, *pointing*

at the lovers, and wagging his great white beard with satisfaction]. A beautiful couple, my son, brought together by you!

DE GUICHE [*eyeing him frigidly*]. As you say! [*To* ROXANE] And now proceed, Madame, to take leave of your husband.

ROXANE. What?

DE GUICHE [*to* CHRISTIAN]. The regiment is on the point of starting. You are to joint it!

ROXANE. To go to war?

DE GUICHE. Of course!

ROXANE. But the cadets are not going!

DE GUICHE. They are! [*Taking out the paper which he had put in his pocket*] Here is the order. [*To* CHRISTIAN] I beg you will take it to the Captain, Baron, yourself.

ROXANE [*throwing herself in* CHRISTIAN'S *arms*]. Christian!

DE GUICHE [*to* CYRANO, *with a malignant laugh*]. The wedding night is somewhat far as yet!

CYRANO [*aside*]. He thinks that he is giving me great pain!

CHRISTIAN [*to* ROXANE]. Oh, once more, dear! . . . Once more!

CYRANO. Be reasonable . . . Come! . . . Enough!

CHRISTIAN [*still clasping* ROXANE]. Oh, it is hard to leave her. . . . You cannot know . . .

CYRANO [*trying to draw him away*]. I know.

[*Drums are heard in the distance sounding a march*]

DE GUICHE [*at the back*]. The regiment is on its way!

ROXANE [*to* CYRANO, *while she clings to* CHRISTIAN *whom he is trying to draw away*]. Oh! . . . I entrust him to your care! Promise that under no circumstance shall his life be placed in danger!

CYRANO. I will endeavor . . . but obviously cannot promise . . .

ROXANE [*same business*]. Promise that he will be careful of himself!

CYRANO. I will do my best, but . . .

ROXANE [*as above*]. That during this terrible siege he shall not take harm from the cold!

CYRANO. I will try, but . . .

ROXANE [*as above*]. That he will be true to me!

CYRANO. Of course, but yet, you see . . .

ROXANE [*as above*]. That he will write to me often!

CYRANO [*stopping*]. Ah, that . . . I promise freely!

ACT IV

THE GASCONY CADETS

The post occupied at the siege of Arras by the company of CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. *At the back, across the whole stage, sloping earthwork. Beyond this is seen a plain stretching to the horizon; the country is covered with constructions relating to the siege. In the distance, against the sky, the outlines of the walls and roofs of Arras. Tents; scattered arms; drums, etc. It is shortly before sunrise. The East is yellow. Sentinels at even intervals. Camp-fires. The* GASCONY CADETS *lie asleep, rolled in their cloaks.* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX *and* LE BRET *are watching. All are very pale and gaunt.* CHRISTIAN *lies sleeping among the others, in his military cape, in the foreground, his face lighted by one of the camp-fires. Silence.*

LE BRET. It is dreadful!

CARBON. Yes. Nothing left.

LE BRET. *Mordious!*

CARBON [*warning him by a gesture to speak lower*]. Curse in a whisper! You will wake them! . . . [*To the* CADETS] Hush! Go to sleep! [*To* LE BRET] Who sleeps dines.

LE BRET. Who lies awake misses two good things . . . What a situation!

[*A few shots are heard in the distance*]

CARBON. The devil take their popping! They will wake my young ones! . . . [*To the* CADETS *who lift their heads*] Go to sleep!

[*The* CADETS *lie down again. Other shots are heard, nearer*]

ONE OF THE CADETS [*stirring*]. The devil! Again?

CARBON. It is nothing. It is Cyrano getting home. [*The heads which had started up, go down again*]

A SENTINEL [*outside*]. *Ventrebleu!* Who goes there?

CYRANO'S VOICE. Bergerac!

THE SENTINEL [*upon the embankment*]. *Ventrebleu!* Who goes there?

CYRANO [*appearing at the top of the embankment*]. Bergerac, blockhead!

[*He comes down.* LE BRET *goes to him, uneasy*]

LE BRET. Ah, thank God!

CYRANO [*warning him by a sign to wake no one*]. Hush!

LE BRET. Wounded?

CYRANO. Do you not know that it has become a habit with them to miss me?

LE BRET. To me, it seems a little excessive that you should, every morning, for the sake of taking a letter, risk . . .

CYRANO [*stopping in front of* CHRISTIAN]. I promised that he would write often. [*He looks at* CHRISTIAN] He sleeps. He has grown pale. If the poor little girl could know that he is starving . . . But handsome as ever!

LE BRET. Go at once and sleep.

CYRANO. Le Bret, do not grumble! Learn this: I nightly cross the Spanish lines at a point where I know beforehand every one will be drunk.

LE BRET. You ought some time to bring us back some victuals!

CYRANO. I must be lightly burdened to flit through! . . . But I know that there will be events before the evening. The French, unless I am much mistaken, will eat or die.

LE BRET. Oh, tell us!

CYRANO. No, I am not certain . . . You will see!

CARBON. What a shameful reversal of the order of things, that the besieger should be starved!

LE BRET. Alas! never was more complicated siege than this of Arras: We besiege Arras, and, caught in a trap, are ourselves besieged by the Cardinal-prince of Spain . . .

CYRANO. Someone now ought to come and besiege him.

LE BRET. I am not joking!

CYRANO. Oh, oh!

LE BRET. To think, ungrateful boy, that every day you risk a life precious as yours, solely to carry . . . [CYRANO *goes toward one of the tents*] Where are you going?

CYRANO. I am going to write another. [*He lifts the canvas flap, and disappears in the tent*]

[*Daybreak has brightened. Rosy flush. The city of Arras at the horizon catches a golden light. The report of a cannon is heard, followed at once by a drum-call, very far away, at the left. Other drums beat, nearer. The drum-calls answer one another, come nearer, come very near, and go off, decreasing, dying in the distance, toward the right, having made the circuit of the camp. Noise of general awakening. Voices of officers in the distance*]

CARBON [*with a sigh*]. The reveille. . . . Ah, me! . . . [*The* CADETS *stir in their cloaks, stretch*] An end to the succulent slumbers! I know but too well what their first word will be!

ONE OF THE CADETS [*sitting up*]. I am famished!

OTHER CADET. I believe I am dying!

ALL. Oh! . . .

CARBON. Get up!

THIRD CADET. I cannot go a step!

FOURTH CADET. I have not strength to stir!

FIRST CADET [*looking at himself in a bit of armor*]. My tongue is coated: it must be the weather that is indigestible!

OTHER CADET. Any one who wants them, can have all my titles of nobility for a Chester cheese . . . or part of one!

OTHER CADET. If my stomach does not have something put into it to take up the attention of my gastric juice, I shall retire into my tent before long . . . like Achilles!

OTHER CADET. Yes, they ought to provide us with bread!

CARBON [*going to the tent into which* CYRANO *has retired; low*]. Cyrano!

OTHER CADETS. We cannot stand this much longer!

CARBON [*as above, at the door of the tent*]. To the rescue, Cyrano! You who succeed so well always in cheering them, come and make them pluck up spirits!

SECOND CADET [*falling upon* FIRST CADET *who is chewing something*]. What are you chewing, man?

FIRST CADET. A bit of gun-tow fried in axle-grease . . . using a burganet as frying-pan. The suburbs of Arras are not precisely rich in game. . . .

OTHER CADET [*entering*]. I have been hunting!

OTHER CADET [*the same*]. I have been fishing!

ALL [*rising and falling upon the newcomers*]. What? — what did you catch? — A pheasant? — A carp? — Quick! quick! . . . Let us see!

THE HUNTSMAN. A sparrow!

THE ANGLER. A gudgeon!

ALL [*exasperated*]. Enough of this! Let us revolt!

CARBON. To the rescue, Cyrano!

[*It is now broad daylight*]

CYRANO [*coming out of the tent, tran-*

quil, a pen behind his ear, a book in his hand]. What is the matter? [*Silence. To* First Cadet] Why do you go off like that, with that slouching gait?

The Cadet. I have something away down in my heels which inconveniences me.

Cyrano. And what is that?

The Cadet. My stomach.

Cyrano. That is where mine is, too.

The Cadet. Then you too must be inconvenienced.

Cyrano. No. The size of the hollow within me merely increases my sense of my size.

Second Cadet. I happen to have teeth, long ones!

Cyrano. The better will you bite . . . in good time!

Third Cadet. I reverberate like a drum!

Cyrano. You will be of use . . . to sound the charge!

Other Cadet. I have a buzzing in my ears!

Cyrano. A mistake. Empty belly, no ears. You hear no buzzing.

Other Cadet. Ah, a trifling article to eat . . . and a little oil upon it!

Cyrano [*taking off the* Cadet's *morion and placing it in his hand*]. That is seasoned.

Other Cadet. What is there we could devour?

Cyrano [*tossing him the book he has been holding*]. Try the Iliad!

Other Cadet. The minister, in Paris, makes his four meals a day!

Cyrano. You feel it remiss in him not to send you a bit of partridge?

The Same. Why should he not? And some wine!

Cyrano. Richelieu, some Burgundy, if you please?

The Same. He might, by one of his capucins!

Cyrano. By his Eminence, perhaps, in sober gray?

Other Cadet. No ogre was ever so hungry!

Cyrano. You may have your fill yet of humble-pie!

First Cadet [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Forever jests! . . . puns! . . . *mots!*

Cyrano. *Le mot* forever, indeed! And I would wish to die, on a fine evening, under a rose-flushed sky, delivering myself of a good *mot* in a good cause! . . . Ah, yes, the best were indeed, far from fever-bed and potion, pierced with the only noble weapon, by an adversary worthy of oneself, to fall upon a glorious field, the point of a sword through his heart, the point of a jest on his lips! . . .

All [*in a wail*]. I am hungry!

Cyrano [*folding his arms*]. God ha' mercy! can you think of nothing but eating? . . . Come here, Bertrandou the fifer, once the shepherd! Take from the double case one of your fifes: breathe into it, play to this pack of guzzlers and of gluttons our homely melodies, of haunting rhythm, every note of which appeals like a little sister, through whose every strain are heard strains of beloved voices . . . mild melodies whose slowness brings to mind the slowness of the smoke upcurling from our native hamlet hearths . . . melodies that seem to speak to a man in his native dialect! . . . [*The old fifer sits down and makes ready his fife*] To-day let the fife, martial unwillingly, be reminded, while your fingers upon its slender stem flutter like birds in a delicate minuet, that before being ebony it was reed; surprise itself by what you make it sing, . . . let it feel restored to it the soul of its youth, rustic and peaceable! [*The old man begins playing Languedoc tunes*] Listen, Gascons! It is no more, beneath his fingers, the shrill fife of the camp, but the soft flute of the woodland! It is no more, between his lips, the whistling note of battle, but the lowly lay of goat-herds leading their flocks to feed! . . . Hark! . . . It sings of the valley, the heath, the forest! . . . of the little shepherd, sunburned under his crimson cap! . . . the green delight of evening on the river! . . . Hark, Gascons all! It sings of Gascony!

[*Every head has drooped; all eyes have grown dreamy; tears are furtively brushed away with a sleeve, the hem of a cloak*]

Carbon [*to* Cyrano, *low*]. You are making them weep!

Cyrano. With homesickness! . . . a nobler pain than hunger . . . not physical: mental! I am glad the seat of their suffering should have removed . . . that the gripe should now afflict their hearts!

Carbon. But you weaken them, making them weep!

Cyrano [*beckoning to a drummer*]. Never fear! The hero in their veins is quickly roused. It is enough to . . . [*He signs to the drummer who begins drumming*]

All [*starting to their feet and snatching*

up their arms]. *Hein?* . . . What? . . . What is it?

CYRANO [*smiling*]. You see? . . . The sound of the drum was enough! Farewell dreams, regrets, old homestead, love . . . What comes with the fife with the drum may go . . .

ONE OF THE CADETS [*looking off at the back*]. Ah! ah! . . . Here comes Monsieur de Guiche!

ALL THE CADETS [*grumbling*]. Hoo . . .

CYRANO [*smiling*]. Flattering murmur . . .

ONE OF THE CADETS. He bores us! . . .

OTHER CADET. Showing himself off, with his broad point collar on top of his armor! . . .

OTHER CADET. As if lace were worn with steel!

FIRST CADET. Convenient, if you have a boil on your neck to cover . . .

SECOND CADET. There is another courtier for you!

OTHER CADET. His uncle's own nephew!

CARBON. He is a Gascon, nevertheless!

FIRST CADET. Not genuine! . . . Never trust him. For a Gascon, look you, must be something of a madman: nothing is so deadly to deal with as a Gascon who is completely rational!

LE BRET. He is pale!

OTHER CADET. He is hungry, as hungry as any poor devil of us! But his corselet being freely embellished with gilt studs, his stomach-ache is radiant in the sun!

CYRANO [*eagerly*]. Let us not appear to suffer, either! You, your cards, your pipes, your dice . . . [*All briskly set themselves to playing with cards and dice, on the heads of drums, on stools, on cloaks spread over the ground. They light long tobacco pipes*] And I will be reading Descartes . . .

[*He walks to and fro, forward and backward, reading a small book which he has taken from his pocket. Tableau. Enter* DE GUICHE. *Every one appears absorbed and satisfied.* DE GUICHE *is very pale. He goes toward* CARBON]

DE GUICHE [*to* CARBON]. Ah, good morning. [*They look at each other attentively. Aside, with satisfaction*] He is pale as plaster.

CARBON [*same business*]. His eyes are all that is left of him.

DE GUICHE [*looking at the* CADETS]. So here are the wrongheaded rascals? . . . Yes, gentlemen, it is reported to me on every side that I am your scoff and derision; that the cadets, highland nobility, Béarn clodhoppers, Périgord baronets, cannot express sufficient contempt for their colonel; call me intriguer, courtier, find it irksome to their taste that I should wear, with my cuirass, a collar of Genoese point, and never cease to air their wondering indignation that a man should be a Gascon without being a vagabond! [*Silence. The* CADETS *continue smoking and playing*] Shall I have you punished by your captain? . . . I do not like to.

CARBON. Did you otherwise, however, . . . I am free, and punish only . . .

DE GUICHE. Ah? . . .

CARBON. My company is paid by myself, belongs to me. I obey no orders but such as relate to war.

DE GUICHE. Ah, is it so? Enough, then. I will treat your taunts with simple scorn. My fashion of deporting myself under fire is well known. You are not unaware of the manner in which yesterday, at Bapaume, I forced back the columns of the Comte de Bucquoi; gathering my men together to plunge forward like an avalanche, three times I charged him. . . .

CYRANO [*without lifting his nose from his book*]. And your white scarf?

DE GUICHE [*surprised and self-satisfied*]. You heard of that circumstance? . . . In fact, it happened that as I was wheeling about to collect my men for the third charge, I was caught in a stream of fugitives which bore me onward to the edge of the enemy. I was in danger of being captured and cut off with an arquebuse, when I had the presence of mind to untie and let slip to the ground the white scarf which proclaimed my military grade. Thus was I enabled, undistinguished, to withdraw from among the Spaniards, and thereupon returning with my reinspirited men, to defeat them. Well? . . . What do you say to the incident?

[*The* CADETS *have appeared not to be listening; at this point, however, hands with cards and dice-boxes remain suspended in the air; no pipe-smoke is ejected; all expresses expectation*]

CYRANO. That never would Henry the Fourth, however great the number of his opponents, have consented to dimin-

ish his presence by the size of his white plume.

[*Silent joy. Cards fall, dice rattle, smoke upwreathes*]

De Guiche. The trick was successful, however!

[*As before, expectation suspends gambling and smoking*]

Cyrano. Very likely. But one should not resign the honor of being a target. [*Cards, dice, smoke, fall, rattle, and upwreathe, as before, in expression of increasing glee*] Had I been at hand when you allowed your scarf to drop — the quality of our courage, monsieur, shows different in this, — I would have picked it up and worn it. . . .

De Guiche. Ah, yes, — more of your Gascon bragging! . . .

Cyrano. Bragging? . . . Lend me the scarf. I engage to mount, ahead of all, to the assault, wearing it crosswise upon my breast!

De Guiche. A Gascon's offer, that too! You know that the scarf was left in the enemy's camp, by the banks of the Scarpe, where bullets since then have hailed . . . whence no one can bring it back!

Cyrano [*taking a white scarf from his pocket and handing it to* De Guiche]. Here it is.

[*Silence. The* Cadets *smother their laughter behind cards and in dice-boxes.* De Guiche *turns around, looks at them; instantly they become grave; one of them, with an air of unconcern, whistles the tune played earlier by the fifer*]

De Guiche [*taking the scarf*]. I thank you. I shall be able with this shred of white to make a signal . . . which I was hesitating to make . . . [*He goes to the top of the bank and waves the scarf*]

All. What now? . . . What is this?

The Sentinel [*at the top of the bank*]. A man . . . over there . . . running off . . .

De Guiche [*coming forward again*]. It is a supposed Spanish spy. He is very useful to us. The information he carries to the enemy is that which I give him, — so that their decisions are influenced by us.

Cyrano. He is a scoundrel!

De Guiche [*coolly tying on his scarf*]. He is a convenience. We were saying? . . . Ah, I was about to tell you. Last night, having resolved upon a desperate stroke to obtain supplies, the Marshal secretly set out for Dourlens. The royal sutlers are encamped there. He expects to join them by way of the tilled fields; but, to provide against interference, he took with him troops in such number that, certainly, if we were now attacked, the enemy would find easy work. Half of the army is absent from the camp.

Carbon. If the Spaniards knew that, it might be serious. But they do not know.

De Guiche. They do. And are going to attack us.

Carbon. Ah!

De Guiche. My pretended spy came to warn me of their intention. He said, moreover: I can direct the attack. At what point shall it be? I will lead them to suppose it the least strong, and they will centre their efforts against it. I answered: Very well. Go from the camp. Look down the line. Let them attack at the point I signal from.

Carbon [*to the* Cadets]. Gentlemen, get ready! [*All get up. Noise of swords and belts being buckled on*]

De Guiche. They will be here in an hour.

First Cadet. Oh! . . . if there is a whole hour! . . .

[*All sit down again, and go on with their games*]

De Guiche [*to* Carbon]. The main object is to gain time. The Marshal is on his way back.

Carbon. And to gain time?

De Guiche. You will be so obliging as to keep them busy killing you.

Cyrano. Ah, this is your revenge!

De Guiche. I will not pretend that if I had been fond of you, I would have thus singled out you and yours; but, as your bravery is unquestionably beyond that of others, I am serving my King at the same time as my inclination.

Cyrano. Suffer me, monsieur, to express my gratitude.

De Guiche. I know that you affect fighting one against a hundred. You will not complain of lacking opportunity. [*He goes toward the back with* Carbon]

Cyrano [*to the* Cadets]. We shall now be able, gentlemen, to add to the Gascon escutcheon, which bears, as it is, six chevrons, or and azure, the chevron that was wanting to complete it, — blood-red!

[De Guiche *at the back speaks low with*

CARBON. *Orders are given. All is made ready to repel an attack.* CYRANO *goes toward* CHRISTIAN, *who stands motionless, with folded arms*]

CYRANO [*laying his hand on* CHRISTIAN'S *shoulder*]. Christian?

CHRISTIAN [*shaking his head*]. Roxane!

CYRANO. Ah me!

CHRISTIAN. I wish I might at least put my whole heart's last blessing in a beautiful letter!

CYRANO. I mistrusted that it would come to-day . . . [*he takes a letter from his doublet*] and I have written your farewells.

CHRISTIAN. Let me see!

CYRANO. You wish to see it? . . .

CHRISTIAN [*taking the letter*]. Yes! [*He opens the letter, begins to read, stops short*] Ah? . . .

CYRANO. What?

CHRISTIAN. That little round blister?

CYRANO [*hurriedly taking back the letter, and looking at it with an artless air*]. A blister?

CHRISTIAN. It is a tear!

CYRANO. It looks like one, does it not? . . . A poet, you see, is sometimes caught in his own snare, — that is what constitutes the interest, the charm! . . . This letter, you must know, is very touching. In writing it I apparently made myself shed tears.

CHRISTIAN. Shed tears? . . .

CYRANO. Yes, because . . . well, to die is not terrible at all . . . but never to see her again, . . . never! . . . that, you know, is horrible beyond all thinking. . . . And, things having taken the turn they have, I shall not see her . . . [CHRISTIAN *looks at him*] we shall not see her . . . [*hastily*] you will not see her. . . .

CHRISTIAN [*snatching the letter from him*]. Give me the letter!

[*Noise in the distance*]

VOICE OF A SENTINEL. *Ventrebleu,* who goes there?

[*Shots. Noise of voices, tinkling of bells*]

CARBON. What is it?

THE SENTINEL [*on the top of the bank*]. A coach! [*All run to see. Noisy exclamations*] What? — In the camp? — It is driving into the camp! — It comes from the direction of the enemy! The devil! Fire upon it! — No! the coachman is shouting something! — What does he say? — He shouts: Service of the King!

DE GUICHE. What? Service of the King?

[*All come down from the bank and fall into order*]

CARBON. Hats off, all!

DE GUICHE [*at the corner*]. Service of the King! Stand back, low rabble, and give it room to turn around with a handsome sweep!

[*The coach comes in at a trot. It is covered with mud and dust. The curtains are drawn. Two lackeys behind. It comes to a standstill*]

CARBON [*shouting*]. Salute!

[*Drums roll. All the* CADETS *uncover*]

DE GUICHE. Let down the steps!

[*Two men hurry forward. The coach door opens*]

ROXANE [*stepping from the carriage*]. Good morning!

[*At the sound of a feminine voice, all the men, in the act of bowing low, straighten themselves. Consternation*]

DE GUICHE. Service of the King! You?

ROXANE. Of the only King! . . . of Love!

CYRANO. Ah, great God!

CHRISTIAN [*rushing to her*]. You! Why are you here?

ROXANE. This siege lasted too long!

CHRISTIAN. Why have you come?

ROXANE. I will tell you!

CYRANO [*who at the sound of her voice has started, then stood motionless without venturing to look her way*]. God! . . . can I trust myself to look at her?

DE GUICHE. You cannot remain here.

ROXANE. But I can, — I can, indeed! Will you favor me with a drum? [*She seats herself upon a drum brought forward for her*] There! I thank you! [*She laughs*] They fired upon my carriage. [*Proudly*] A parol! — It does look rather as if it were made out of a pumpkin, does it not? like Cinderella's coach! and the footmen made out of rats! [*Blowing a kiss to* CHRISTIAN] How do you do? [*Looking at them all*] You do not look overjoyed! . . . Arras is a long way from Paris, do you know it? [*Catching sight of* CYRANO] Cousin, delighted!

CYRANO [*coming toward her*]. But how did you . . .?

ROXANE. How did I find the army? Dear me, cousin, that was simple: I

followed straight along the line of devastation. . . . Ah, I should never have believed in such horrors had I not seen them! Gentlemen, if that is the service of your King, I like mine better!

CYRANO. But this is mad! . . . By what way did you come?

ROXANE. Way? . . . I drove through the Spaniard's camp.

FIRST CADET. Ah, what will keep lovely woman from her way!

DE GUICHE. But how did you contrive to get through their lines?

LE BRET. That must have been difficult . . .

ROXANE. No, not very. I simply drove through them, in my coach, at a trot. If a hidalgo, with arrogant front, showed likely to stop us, I put my face at the window, wearing my sweetest smile, and, those gentlemen being, — let the French not grudge my saying so! — the most gallant in the world, . . . I passed!

CARBON. Such a smile is a passport, certainly! . . . But you must have been not unfrequently bidden to stand and deliver where you were going?

ROXANE. Not unfrequently, you are right. Whereupon I would say, "I am going to see my lover!" At once, the fiercest looking Spaniard of them all would gravely close my carriage door; and, with a gesture the King might emulate, motion aside the musket-barrels levelled at me; and, superb at once for grace and haughtiness, bringing his spurs together, and lifting his plumed hat, bow low and say, "Pass, señorita, pass!"

CHRISTIAN. But, Roxane . . .

ROXANE. I said, "My lover!" yes, forgive me! — You see, if I had said, "My husband!" they would never have let me by!

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

ROXANE. What troubles you?

DE GUICHE. You must leave at once!

ROXANE. I?

CYRANO. At once!

LE BRET. As fast as you can.

CHRISTIAN. Yes, you must.

ROXANE. But why?

CHRISTIAN [*embarrassed*]. Because . . .

CYRANO [*embarrassed too*]. In three quarters of an hour . . .

DE GUICHE [*the same*]. Or an hour . . .

CARBON [*the same*]. You had much better . . .

LE BRET [*the same*]. You might . . .

ROXANE. I shall remain. You are going to fight.

ALL. Oh, no! . . . No!

ROXANE. He is my husband! [*She throws herself in* CHRISTIAN'S *arms*] Let me be killed with you!

CHRISTIAN. How your eyes shine!

ROXANE. I will tell you why they shine!

DE GUICHE [*desperately*]. It is a post of horrible probabilities!

ROXANE [*turning toward him*]. What — of horrible? . . .

CYRANO. In proof of which he appointed us to it! . . .

ROXANE. Ah, you wish me made a widow?

DE GUICHE. I swear to you . . .

ROXANE. No! Now I have lost all regard. . . . Now I will surely not go. . . . Besides, I think it fun!

CYRANO. What? The précieuse contained a heroine?

ROXANE. Monsieur de Bergerac, I am a cousin of yours!

ONE OF THE CADETS. Never think but that we will take good care of you!

ROXANE [*more and more excited*]. I am sure you will, my friends!

OTHER CADET. The whole camp smells of iris.

ROXANE. By good fortune I put on a hat that will look well in battle! [*Glancing toward* DE GUICHE] But perhaps it is time the Count should go. — The battle might begin.

DE GUICHE. Ah, it is intolerable! — I am going to inspect my guns, and coming back. — You still have time: think better of it!

ROXANE. Never!

[*Exit* DE GUICHE]

CHRISTIAN [*imploring*]. Roxane!

ROXANE. No!

FIRST CADET. She is going to stay!

ALL [*hurrying about, pushing one another, snatching things from one another*]. A comb! — Soap! — My jacket is torn, a needle! — A ribbon! — Lend me your pocket-mirror! — My cuffs! — Curling-irons! — A razor!

ROXANE [*to* CYRANO, *who is still pleading with her*]. No! Nothing shall prevail upon me to stir from this spot!

CARBON [*after having, like the others, tightened his belt, dusted himself, brushed his hat, straightened his feather, pulled down his cuffs, approaches* ROXANE, *and ceremoniously*]. It is, perhaps, proper, since you are going to stay, that I should present to you a few of the gentlemen about to have the honor of dying in your presence . . . [ROXANE *bows, and*

stands waiting, with her arm through CHRISTIAN'S] Baron Peyrescous de Colignac!

THE CADET [*bowing*]. Madame!

CARBON [*continuing to present the* CADETS]. Baron de Casterac de Cohusac, — Vidame de Malgouyre Estressac Lesbas d'Escarabiot, — Chevalier d'Antignac-Juzet, — Baron Hillot de Blagnac-Salechan de Castel Crabioules . . .

ROXANE. But how many names have you apiece?

BARON HILLOT. Innumerable!

CARBON [*to* ROXANE]. Open your hand with the handkerchief!

ROXANE [*opens her hand; the handkerchief drops*]. Why?

[*The whole company starts forward to pick it up*]

CARBON [*instantly catching it*]. My company had no flag! Now, my word, it will have the prettiest one in the army!

ROXANE [*smiling*]. It is rather small!

CARBON [*fastening the handkerchief on the staff of his captain's spear*]. But it is lace!

ONE OF THE CADETS [*to the others*]. I could die without a murmur, having looked upon that beautiful face, if I had so much as a walnut inside me! . . .

CARBON [*who has overheard, indignant*]. Shame! . . . to talk of food when an exquisite woman . . .

ROXANE. But the air of the camp is searching, and I myself am hungry: Patties, jellied meat, light wine . . . are what I should like best! Will you kindly bring me some?

[*Consternation*]

ONE OF THE CADETS. Bring you some?

OTHER CADET. And where, great God, shall we get them?

ROXANE [*quietly*]. In my coach.

ALL. What?

ROXANE. But there is much to be done, carving and boning and serving. Look more closely at my coachman, gentlemen, and you will recognize a precious individual: the sauces, if we wish, can be warmed over . . .

THE CADETS [*springing toward the coach*]. It is Ragueneau! [*Cheers*] Oh! Oh!

ROXANE [*watching them*]. Poor fellows!

CYRANO [*kissing her hand*]. Kind fairy!

RAGUENEAU [*standing upon the box-seat like a vendor at a public fair*]. Gentlemen!

[*Enthusiasm*]

THE CADETS. Bravo! Bravo!

RAGUENEAU. How should the Spaniards, when so much beauty passed, suspect the repast?

[*Applause*]

CYRANO [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. H'm! Hm! Christian!

RAGUENEAU. Absorbed in gallantry, no heed took they . . . [*he takes a dish from the box-seat*] . . . of galantine!

[*Applause. The galantine is passed from hand to hand*]

CYRANO [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. A word with you . . .

RAGUENEAU. Venus kept their eyes fixed upon herself, while Diana slipped past with the . . . [*he brandishes a joint*] game!

[*Enthusiasm. The joint is seized by twenty hands at once*]

CYRANO [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. I must speak with you.

ROXANE [*to the* CADETS *who come forward, their arms full of provisions*]. Spread it all upon the ground!

[*Assisted by the two imperturbable footmen who were on the back of the coach, she arranges everything on the grass*]

ROXANE [*to* CHRISTIAN, *whom* CYRANO *is trying to draw aside*]. Make yourself useful, sir!

[CHRISTIAN *comes and helps her.* CYRANO *gives evidence of uneasiness*]

RAGUENEAU. A truffled peacock!

FIRST CADET [*radiant, comes forward cutting off a large slice of ham*]. Praise the pigs, we shall not go to our last fight with nothing in our b . . . [*correcting himself at sight of* ROXANE] hm . . . stomachs!

RAGUENEAU [*flinging the carriage cushions*]. The cushions are stuffed with snipe!

[*Tumult. The cushions are ripped open. Laughter. Joy*]

RAGUENEAU [*flinging bottles of red wine*]. Molten ruby. [*Bottles of white wine*] Fluid topaz!

ROXANE [*throwing a folded tablecloth to* CYRANO]. Unfold the cloth: Hey! . . . be nimble!

RAGUENEAU [*waving one of the coach lanterns*]. Each lantern is a little larder!

CYRANO [*low to* CHRISTIAN, *while together they spread the cloth*]. I must speak with you before you speak with her . . .

RAGUENEAU. The handle of my whip, behold, is a sausage!

ROXANE [*pouring wine, dispensing it*]. Since we are the ones to be killed, *morbleu*, we will not fret ourselves about the rest of the army! Everything for the Gascons! . . . And if De Guiche comes, nobody must invite him! [*Going from one to the other*] Gently! You have time . . . You must not eat so fast! There, drink. What are you crying about?

FIRST CADET. It is too good!

ROXANE. Hush! White wine or red? — Bread for Monsieur de Carbon! — A knife! — Pass your plate! — You prefer crust? — A little more? — Let me help you. — Champagne? — A wing? —

CYRANO [*following* ROXANE, *his hands full of dishes, helping her*]. I adore her!

ROXANE [*going to* CHRISTIAN]. What will you take?

CHRISTIAN. Nothing!

ROXANE. Oh, but you must take something! This biscuit — in a little Muscatel, — just a little?

CHRISTIAN [*trying to keep her from going*]. Tell me what made you come?

ROXANE. I owe myself to those poor fellows. . . . Be patient, . . . By and by . . .

LE BRET [*who had gone toward the back to pass a loaf of bread on the end of a pike to the* SENTINEL *upon the earthwork*]. De Guiche!

CYRANO. Presto! Vanish basket, flagon, platter, and pan! Hurry! Let us look as if nothing were! [*To* RAGUENEAU] Take a flying leap on to your box! — Is everything hidden?

[*In a wink, all the eatables have been pushed into the tents, or hidden under clothes, cloaks, hats. Enter* DE GUICHE, *hurriedly; he stops short, sniffing the air. Silence*]

DE GUICHE. What a good smell!

ONE OF THE CADETS [*singing, with effect of mental abstraction*]. To lo lo lo. . . .

DE GUICHE [*stopping and looking at him closely*]. What is the matter with you — you, there? You are red as a crab.

THE CADET. I? Nothing . . . It is just my blood. . . . We are going to fight: it tells . . .

OTHER CADET. Poom . . . poom . . . poom . . .

DE GUICHE [*turning*]. What is this?

THE CADET [*slightly intoxicated*]. Nothing . . . A song . . . just a little song.

DE GUICHE. You look in good spirits, my boy!

THE CADET. Danger affects me that way!

DE GUICHE [*calling* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX *to give an order*]. Captain, I . . . [*He stops at sight of his face*] *Peste!* You look in good spirits, too.

CARBON [*flushed, holding a bottle behind him; with an evasive gesture*]. Oh! . . .

DE GUICHE. I had a cannon left over, which I have ordered them to place [*he points in the wing*] there, in that corner, and which your men can use, if necessary . . .

ONE OF THE CADETS [*swaying from one foot to the other*]. Charming attention!

OTHER CADET [*smiling sugarily*]. Our thanks for your gracious thoughtfulness!

DE GUICHE. Have they gone mad? . . . [*Dryly*] As you are not accustomed to handling a cannon, look out for its kicking . . .

FIRST CADET. Ah, pfft! . . .

DE GUICHE [*going toward him, furious*]. But . . .

THE CADET. A cannon knows better than to kick a Gascon!

DE GUICHE [*seizing him by the arm and shaking him*]. You are all tipsy: on what?

THE CADET [*magnificently*]. The smell of powder!

DE GUICHE [*shrugs his shoulders, pushes aside the* CADET, *and goes rapidly toward* ROXANE]. Quick, Madame! what have you condescended to decide?

ROXANE. I remain.

DE GUICHE. Retire, I beseech you!

ROXANE. No.

DE GUICHE. If you are determined, then . . . Let me have a musket!

CARBON. What do you mean?

DE GUICHE. I, too, will remain.

CYRANO. At last, Monsieur, an instance of pure and simple bravery!

FIRST CADET. Might you be a Gascon, lace collar notwithstanding?

DE GUICHE. I do not leave a woman in danger.

SECOND CADET [*to* FIRST CADET]. Look here! I think he might be given something to eat.

[*All the food reappears, as if by magic*]

DE GUICHE [*his eyes brightening*]. Provisions?

THIRD CADET. Under every waistcoat!

DE GUICHE [*mastering himself, haughtily*]. Do you imagine that I will eat your leavings?

CYRANO [*bowing*]. You are improving!

DE GUICHE [*proudly, falling at the last of the sentence into a slightly* GASCON *accent*]. I will fight before I eat!

FIRST CADET [*exultant*]. Fight! Eat! . . . He spoke with an accent!

DE GUICHE [*laughing*]. I did?

THE CADET. He is one of us!

[*All fall to dancing*]

CARBON [*who a moment before disappeared behind the earthworks, reappearing at the top*]. I have placed my pikemen. They are a determined troop . . .

[*He points at a line of pikes projecting above the bank*]

DE GUICHE [*to* ROXANE, *bowing*]. Will you accept my hand and pass them in review!

[*She takes his hand; they go toward the bank. Every one uncovers and follows*]

CHRISTIAN [*going to* CYRANO, *quickly*]. Speak! Be quick!

[*As* ROXANE *appears at the top of the bank, the pikes disappear, lowered in a salute, and a cheer goes up;* ROXANE *bows*]

PIKEMEN [*outside*]. Vivat!

CHRISTIAN. What did you want to tell me?

CYRANO. In case Roxane . . .

CHRISTIAN. Well?

CYRANO. Should speak to you of the letters . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes, the letters. I know!

CYRANO. Do not commit the blunder of appearing surprised . . .

CHRISTIAN. At what?

CYRANO. I must tell you! . . . It is quite simple, and merely comes into my mind to-day because I see her. You have . . .

CHRISTIAN. Hurry.

CYRANO. You . . . you have written to her oftener than you suppose . . .

CHRISTIAN. Oh, have I?

CYRANO. Yes. It was my business, you see. I had undertaken to interpret your passion, and sometimes I wrote without having told you I should write.

CHRISTIAN. Ah?

CYRANO. It is very simple.

CHRISTIAN. But how did you succeed since we have been so closely surrounded, in . . . ?

CYRANO. Oh, before daybreak I could cross the lines . . .

CHRISTIAN [*folding his arms*]. Ah, that is very simple, too? . . . And how many times a week have I been writing? Twice? Three times? Four? . . .

CYRANO. More.

CHRISTIAN. Every day?

CYRANO. Yes, every day . . . twice.

CHRISTIAN [*violently*]. And you cared so much about it that you were willing to brave death. . . .

CYRANO [*seeing* ROXANE, *who returns*]. Be still . . . Not before her. [*He goes quickly into his tent*]

[CADETS *come and go at the back.* CARBON *and* DE GUICHE *give orders*]

ROXANE [*running to* CHRISTIAN]. And now, Christian . . .

CHRISTIAN [*taking her hands*]. And now, you shall tell me why, over these fearful roads, through these ranks of rough soldiery, you risked your dear self to join me?

ROXANE. Because of the letters!

CHRISTIAN. The . . . ? What did you say?

ROXANE. It is through your fault that I have been exposed to such and so many dangers. It is your letters that have gone to my head! Ah, think how many you have written me in a month each one more beautiful . . .

CHRISTIAN. What? . . . Because of a few little love letters . . .

ROXANE. Say nothing! You cannot understand! Listen: The truth is that I took to idolizing you one evening, when, below my window, in a voice I did not know, before your soul began to reveal itself . . . Think then what the effect should be of your letters, which have been like your voice heard constantly for one month, your voice of that evening, so tender, caressing . . . You must bear it as you can, I have come to you! Prudent Penelope would not have stayed at home with her eternal tapestry, if Ulysses, her lord, had written as you write . . . but, impulsive as Helen, have tossed aside her yarns, and flown to join him!

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

ROXANE. I read them, I re-read them, in reading I grew faint . . . I became your own indeed! Each fluttering leaf was like a petal of your soul wafted to me . . . In every word of those letters, love is felt as a flame would

be felt, — love, compelling, sincere, profound . . .

CHRISTIAN. Ah, sincere, profound? . . . You say that it can be felt, Roxane?

ROXANE. He asks me!

CHRISTIAN. And so you came? . . .

ROXANE. I came, oh Christian, my own, my master! — If I were to kneel at your feet you would lift me, I know. It is my soul therefore which kneels, and never can you lift it from that posture! — I came to implore your pardon — as it is fitting, for we are both perhaps about to die! — your pardon for having done you the wrong, at first, in my shallowness, of loving you . . . for mere looking!

CHRISTIAN [*in alarm*]. Ah, Roxane! . . .

ROXANE. Later, dear one, grown less shallow — similar to a bird which flutters before it can fly, — your gallant exterior appealing to me still, but your soul appealing equally, I loved you for both! . . .

CHRISTIAN. And now?

ROXANE. Now at last yourself are vanquished by yourself: I love you for your soul alone . . .

CHRISTIAN [*drawing away*]. Ah, Roxane.

ROXANE. Rejoice! For to be loved for that wherewith we are clothed so fleetingly must put a noble heart to torture. . . . Your dear thought at last casts your dear face in shadow: the harmonious lineaments whereby at first you pleased me, I do not see them, now my eyes are open!

CHRISTIAN. Oh!

ROXANE. You question your own triumph?

CHRISTIAN [*sorrowfully*]. Roxane!

ROXANE. I understand, you cannot conceive of such a love in me?

CHRISTIAN. I do not wish to be loved like that! I wish to be loved quite simply . . .

ROXANE. For that which other women till now have loved in you? Ah, let yourself be loved in a better way!

CHRISTIAN. No . . . I was happier before! . . . . . .

ROXANE. Ah, you do not understand! It is now that I love you most, that I truly love you. It is that which makes you, you — can you not grasp it? — that I worship . . . And did you no longer walk our earth like a young martial Apollo . . .

CHRISTIAN. Say no more.

ROXANE. Still would I love you! . . . Yes, though a blight should have fallen upon your face and form . . .

CHRISTIAN. Do not say it!

ROXANE. But I do say it, . . . I do!

CHRISTIAN. What? If I were ugly, distinctly, offensively?

ROXANE. If you were ugly, dear, I swear it!

CHRISTIAN. God!

ROXANE. And you are glad, profoundly glad?

CHRISTIAN [*in a smothered voice*]. Yes . . .

ROXANE. What is it?

CHRISTIAN [*pushing her gently away*]. Nothing. I have a word or two to say to some one: your leave, for a second . . .

ROXANE. But . . .

CHRISTIAN [*pointing at a group of* CADETS *at the back*]. In my selfish love, I have kept you from those poor brothers. . . . Go, smile on them a little, before they die, dear . . . go!

ROXANE [*moved*]. Dear Christian!

[*She goes toward the* GASCONS *at the back; they respectfully gather around her*]

CHRISTIAN [*calling toward* CYRANO'S *tent*]. Cyrano!

CYRANO [*appears, armed for battle*]. What is it? . . . How pale you are!

CHRISTIAN. She does not love me any more.

CYRANO. What do you mean?

CHRISTIAN. She loves you.

CYRANO. No.

CHRISTIAN. She only loves my soul!

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. Yes! Therefore it is you she loves . . . and you love her . . .

CYRANO. I . . .

CHRISTIAN. I know it!

CYRANO. It is true.

CHRISTIAN. To madness!

CYRANO. More.

CHRISTIAN. Tell her then.

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. Why not?

CYRANO. Look at me!

CHRISTIAN. She would love me grown ugly.

CYRANO. She told you so?

CHRISTIAN. With the utmost frankness!

CYRANO. Ah! I am glad she should have told you that! But, believe me, believe me, place no faith in such a mad asseveration! Dear God, I am glad such a thought should have come to her,

and that she should have spoken it, — but believe me, do not take her at her word: Never cease to be the handsome fellow you are. . . . She would not forgive me!

CHRISTIAN. That is what I wish to discover.

CYRANO. No! no!

CHRISTIAN. Let her choose between us! You shall tell her everything.

CYRANO. No . . . No . . . I refuse the ordeal!

CHRISTIAN. Shall I stand in the way of your happiness because my outside is not so much amiss?

CYRANO. And I? shall I destroy yours, because, thanks to the hazard that sets us upon earth, I have the gift of expressing . . . what you perhaps feel?

CHRISTIAN. You shall tell her everything!

CYRANO. He persists in tempting me . . . It is a mistake . . . and cruel!

CHRISTIAN. I am weary of carrying about, in my own self, a rival!

CYRANO. Christian!

CHRISTIAN. Our marriage . . . contracted without witnesses . . . can be annulled . . . if we survive!

CYRANO. He persists! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes. I will be loved for my sole self, or not at all! — I am going to see what they are about. Look! I will walk to the end of the line and back . . . Tell her, and let her pronounce between us.

CYRANO. She will pronounce for you.

CHRISTIAN. I can but hope she will! [*Calling*] Roxane!

CYRANO. No! No!

ROXANE [*coming forward*]. What is it?

CHRISTIAN. Cyrano has something to tell you . . . something important!

[ROXANE *goes hurriedly to* CYRANO. *Exit* CHRISTIAN]

ROXANE. Something important?

CYRANO [*distracted*]. He is gone! . . . [*To* ROXANE] Nothing whatever! He attaches — but you must know him of old! — he attaches importance to trifles . . .

ROXANE [*quickly*]. He did not believe what I told him a moment ago? . . . I saw that he did not believe . . .

CYRANO [*taking her hand*]. But did you in very truth tell him the truth?

ROXANE. Yes. Yes. I should love him even . . . [*She hesitates a second*]

CYRANO [*smiling sadly*]. You do not like to say it before me?

ROXANE. But . . .

CYRANO. I shall not mind! . . . Even if he were ugly?

ROXANE. Yes . . . Ugly. [*Musket shots outside*] They are firing!

CYRANO [*ardently*]. Dreadfully ugly?

ROXANE. Dreadfully.

CYRANO. Disfigured?

ROXANE. Disfigured!

CYRANO. Grotesque?

ROXANE. Nothing could render him grotesque . . . to me.

CYRANO. You would love him still?

ROXANE. I believe that I should love him more . . . if that were possible!

CYRANO [*losing his head, aside*]. My God, perhaps she means it . . . perhaps it is true . . . and that way is happiness! [*To* ROXANE] I . . . Roxane . . . listen!

LE BRET [*comes in hurriedly; calls softly*]. Cyrano!

CYRANO [*turning*]. *Hein?*

LE BRET. Chut! [*He whispers a few words to* CYRANO]

CYRANO [*letting* ROXANE'S *hand drop, with a cry*]. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. What ails you?

CYRANO [*to himself, in consternation*] It is finished! [*Musket reports*].

ROXANE. What is it? What is happening? Who is firing? [*She goes to the back to look off*]

CYRANO. It is finished. . . . My lips are sealed for evermore!

[CADETS *come in, attempting to conceal something they carry among them; they surround it, preventing* ROXANE *from seeing it*]

ROXANE. What has happened?

CYRANO [*quickly stopping her as she starts toward them*]. Nothing!

ROXANE. These men? . . .

CYRANO [*drawing her away*]. Pay no attention to them!

ROXANE. But what were you about to say to me before?

CYRANO. What was I about to say? . . . Oh, nothing! . . . Nothing whatever, I assure you. [*Solemnly*] I swear that Christian's spirit, that his soul, were . . . [*in terror, correcting himself*] are the greatest that . . .

ROXANE. Were? . . . [*With a great cry*] Ah! . . . [*Turns to the group of* CADETS, *and thrusts them aside*]

CYRANO. It is finished!

ROXANE [*seeing* CHRISTIAN *stretched out in his cloak*]. Christian!

LE BRET [*to* CYRANO]. At the enemy's first shot!

[ROXANE *throws herself on* CHRISTIAN'S *body. Musket reports. Clashing of swords. Tramping. Drums*]

CARBON [*sword in hand*]. The attack! To your muskets! [*Followed by the* CADETS *he goes to the further side of the earthworks*]

ROXANE. Christian!

CARBON'S VOICE [*beyond the earthworks*]. Make haste!

ROXANE. Christian!

CARBON. Fall into line!

ROXANE. Christian!

CARBON. Measure . . . match!

[RAGUENEAU *has come running in with water in a steel cap*]

CHRISTIAN [*in a dying voice*]. Roxane!

CYRANO [*quick, low in* CHRISTIAN'S *ear, while* ROXANE, *distracted, dips into the water a fragment of linen torn from her breast to bind his wound*]. I have told her everything! . . . You are still the one she loves!

[CHRISTIAN *closes his eyes*]

ROXANE. What, dear love?

CARBON. Muzzle . . . high!

ROXANE [*to* CYRANO]. He is not dead? . . .

CARBON. Open charge . . . with teeth!

ROXANE. I feel his cheek grow cold against my own!

CARBON. Take aim!

ROXANE. A letter on his breast . . . . [*She opens it.*] To me!

CYRANO [*aside*]. My letter!

CARBON. Fire!

[*Musket shots. Cries. Roar of battle*]

CYRANO [*trying to free his hand which* ROXANE *clasps kneeling*]. But, Roxane, they are fighting.

ROXANE [*clinging*]. No! . . . Stay with me a little! . . . He is dead. You are the only one that truly knew him. . . . [*She cries subduedly*] Was he not an exquisite being, . . . an exceptional, marvellous being? . . .

CYRANO [*standing bareheaded*]. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A poet without his peer, . . . one verily to reverence?

CYRANO. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A sublime spirit?

CYRANO. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A profound heart, such as the profane could never have understood . . . a soul as noble as it was charming? . . . .

CYRANO [*firmly*]. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE [*throwing herself on* CHRISTIAN'S *body*]. And he is dead!

CYRANO [*aside, drawing his sword*]. And I have now only to die, since, without knowing it, she mourns my death in his!

[*Trumpets in the distance*]

DE GUICHE [*reappears on the top of the bank, bareheaded, his forehead bloody; in a thundering voice*]. The signal they promised! The flourish of trumpets! . . . The French are entering the camp with supplies! . . . Stand fast a little longer!

ROXANE. Upon his letter . . . blood, . . . tears!

A VOICE [*outside, shouting*]. Surrender!

VOICES OF THE CADETS. No!

RAGUENEAU [*who from the top of the coach is watching the battle beyond the bank*]. The conflict rages hotter! . . .

CYRANO [*to* DE GUICHE *pointing at* ROXANE]. Take her away! . . . I am going to charge.

ROXANE [*kissing the letter, in a dying voice*]. His blood! . . . his tears!

RAGUENEAU [*leaping from the coach and running to* ROXANE]. She is fainting!

DE GUICHE [*at the top of the bank, to the* CADETS, *madly*]. Stand fast!

VOICE [*outside*]. Surrender!

VOICES OF THE CADETS. No!

CYRANO [*to* DE GUICHE]. Your courage none will question . . . [*Pointing at* ROXANE] Fly for the sake of saving her!

DE GUICHE [*runs to* ROXANE *and lifts her in his arms*]. So be it! But we shall win the day if you can hold out a little longer . . .

CYRANO. We can. [*To* ROXANE, *whom* DE GUICHE, *helped by* RAGUENEAU, *is carrying off insensible*]. Goodby, Roxane!

[*Tumult. Cries.* CADETS *reappear, wounded, and fall upon the stage.* CYRANO *dashing forward to join the combatants is stopped on the crest of the bank by* CARBON *covered with blood*]

CARBON. We are losing ground . . . I have got two halberd wounds . . .

CYRANO [*yelling to the* GASCONS]. Steadfast! . . . Never give them an inch! . . . Brave boys! [*To* CARBON] Fear nothing! I have various deaths to avenge: Christian's and all my hopes'! [*They come down.* CY-

RANO *brandishes the spear at the head of which* ROXANE'S *handkerchief is fastened*] Float free, little cobweb flag, embroidered with her initials! [*He drives the spear-staff into the earth; shouts to the* CADETS] Fall on them, boys! . . . Crush them! [*To the* FIFER] Fifer, play!

[*The* FIFER *plays. Some of the wounded get to their feet again. Some of the* CADETS, *coming down the bank, group themselves around* CYRANO *and the little flag. The coach, filled and covered with men, bristles with muskets and becomes a redoubt*]

ONE OF THE CADETS [*appears upon the top of the bank backing while he fights; he cries*]. They are coming up the slope! [*Falls dead*]

CYRANO. We will welcome them!

[*Above the bank suddenly rises a formidable array of enemies. The great banners of the Imperial Army appear*]

CYRANO. Fire!

[*General discharge*]

CRY [*among the hostile ranks*]. Fire!

[*Shots returned.* CADETS *drop on every side*]

A SPANISH OFFICER [*taking off his hat*]. What are these men, so determined all to be killed?

CYRANO [*declaiming, as he stands in the midst of flying bullets*].

They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux;
Fame fighters, liars, desperates . . .

[*He leaps forward, followed by a handful of survivors*]

They are the Gascony Cadets! . . .

[*The rest is lost in the confusion of battle*]

ACT V

CYRANO'S GAZETTE

Fifteen years later, 1655. *The park belonging to the convent of the Sisters of the Cross, in Paris.*

Superb shade-trees. At the left, the house; several doors opening on to broad terrace with steps. In the centre of the stage, huge tree standing alone in a clear oval space. At the right, first wing, a semicircular stone seat, surrounded by large box-trees.

All along the back of the stage, an avenue of chestnut-trees, which leads, at the right, fourth wing, to the door of a chapel seen through trees. Through the double row of trees overarching the avenue are seen lawns, other avenues, clumps of trees, the further recesses of the park, the sky.

The chapel opens by a small side-door into a colonnade, overrun by a scarlet creeper; the colonnade comes forward and is lost to sight behind the box-trees at the right.

It is Autumn. The leaves are turning, above the still fresh grass. Dark patches of evergreens, box and yew. Under each tree a mat of yellow leaves. Fallen leaves litter the whole stage, crackle underfoot, lie thick on the terrace and the seats.

Between the seat at the right and the tree in the centre, a large embroidery frame, in front of which a small chair. Baskets full of wools, in skeins and balls. On the frame, a piece of tapestry, partly done.

At the rise of the curtain, nuns come and go in the park; a few are seated on the stone seat around an older nun; leaves are falling.

SISTER MARTHA [*to* MOTHER MARGARET]. Sister Claire, after putting on her cap, went back to the mirror, to see herself again.

MOTHER MARGARET [*to* SISTER CLAIRE]. It was unbecoming, my child.

SISTER CLAIRE. But Sister Martha, to-day, after finishing her portion, went back to the tart for a plum. I saw her!

MOTHER MARGARET [*to* SISTER MARTHA]. My child, it was ill done.

SISTER CLAIRE. I merely glanced! . . .

SISTER MARTHA. The plum was about so big! . . .

MOTHER MARGARET. This evening, when Monsieur Cyrano comes, I will tell him.

SISTER CLAIRE [*alarmed*]. No! He will laugh at us!

SISTER MARTHA. He will say that nuns are very vain!

SISTER CLAIRE. And very greedy!

MOTHER MARGARET. And really very good.

SISTER CLAIRE. Mother Margaret, is it not true that he has come here every Saturday in the last ten years?

MOTHER MARGARET. Longer! Ever since his cousin brought among our linen coifs her coif of crape, the worldly symbol of her mourning, which settled like a sable bird amidst our flock of white some fourteen years ago.

SISTER MARTHA. He alone, since she took her abode in our cloister, has art to dispel her never-lessening sorrow.

ALL THE NUNS. He is so droll! — It is merry when he comes! — He teases us! — He is delightful! — We are greatly attached to him! — We are making Angelica paste to offer him!

SISTER MARTHA. He is not, however, a very good Catholic!

SISTER CLAIRE. We will convert him.

THE NUNS. We will! We will!

MOTHER MARGARET. I forbid your renewing that attempt, my children. Do not trouble him: he might not come so often!

SISTER MARTHA. But . . . God!

MOTHER MARGARET. Set your hearts at rest: God must know him of old!

SISTER MARTHA. But every Saturday, when he comes, he says to me as soon as he sees me, "Sister, I ate meat, yesterday!"

MOTHER MARGARET. Ah, that is what he says? . . . Well, when he last said it, he had eaten nothing for two days.

SISTER MARTHA. Mother!

MOTHER MARGARET. He is poor.

SISTER MARTHA. Who told you?

MOTHER MARGARET. Monsieur Le Bret.

SISTER MARTHA. Does no one offer him assistance?

MOTHER MARGARET. No, he would take offence.

[*In one of the avenues at the back, appears* ROXANE, *in black, wearing a widow's coif and long mourning veil;* DE GUICHE, *markedly older, magnificently dressed, walks beside her. They go very slowly.* MOTHER MARGARET *gets up*]

MOTHER MARGARET. Come, we must go within. Madame Magdeleine is walking in the park with a visitor.

SISTER MARTHA [*low to* SISTER CLAIRE]. Is not that the Marshal-duke de Grammont?

SISTER CLAIRE [*looking*]. I think it is!

SISTER MARTHA. He has not been to see her in many months!

THE NUNS. He is much engaged! — The Court! — The Camp! —

SISTER CLAIRE. Cares of this world!

[*Exeunt.* DE GUICHE *and* ROXANE *come forward silently, and stop near the embroidery frame. A pause*]

DE GUICHE. And so you live here, uselessly fair, always in mourning?

ROXANE. Always.

DE GUICHE. As faithful as of old?

ROXANE. As faithful.

DE GUICHE [*after a time*]. Have you forgiven me?

ROXANE. Since I am here.

[*Other silence*]

DE GUICHE. And he was really such a rare being?

ROXANE. To understand, one must have known him!

DE GUICHE. Ah, one must have known him! . . . Perhaps I did not know him well enough. And his last letter, still and always, against your heart?

ROXANE. I wear it on this velvet, as a more holy scapular.

DE GUICHE. Even dead, you love him?

ROXANE. It seems to me sometimes he is but half dead, that our hearts have not been severed, that his love still wraps me round, no less than ever living!

DE GUICHE [*after another silence*]. Does Cyrano come here to see you?

ROXANE. Yes, often. That faithful friend fulfils by me the office of gazette. His visits are regular. He comes: when the weather is fine, his armchair is brought out under the trees. I wait for him here with my work; the hour strikes; on the last stroke, I hear — I do not even turn to see who comes! — his cane upon the steps; he takes his seat; he rallies me upon my never-ending tapestry; he tells off the events of the week, and . . . [LE BRET *appears on the steps*] Ah, Le Bret! [LE BRET *comes down the steps*] How does your friend?

LE BRET. Ill.

THE DUKE. Oh!

ROXANE. He exaggerates! . . .

LE BRET. All is come to pass as I foretold: neglect! poverty! his writings ever breeding him new enemies! Fraud he attacks in every embodiment: usurpers, pious pretenders, plagiarists, asses in lions' skins . . . all! He attacks all!

ROXANE. No one, however, but stands in profound respect of his sword. They will never succeed in silencing him.

DE GUICHE [*shaking his head*]. Who knows?

LE BRET. What I fear is not the aggression of man; what I fear is loneliness and want and winter creeping upon

him like stealthy wolves in his miserable attic; they are the insidious foes that will have him by the throat at last! . . . Every day he tightens his belt by an eyelet; his poor great nose is pinched, and turned the sallow of old ivory; the worn black serge you see him in is the only coat he has!

DE GUICHE. Ah, there is one who did not succeed! . . . Nevertheless, do not pity him too much.

LE BRET [*with a bitter smile*]. Marshal! . . .

DE GUICHE. Do not pity him too much: he signed no bonds with the world; he has lived free in his thought as in his actions.

LE BRET [*as above*]. Duke . . .

DE GUICHE [*haughtily*]. I know, yes: I have everything, he has nothing. . . . But I should like to shake hands with him. [*Bowing to* ROXANE] Good-by.

ROXANE. I will go with you to the door.

[DE GUICHE *bows to* LE BRET *and goes with* ROXANE *toward the terrace door*]

DE GUICHE [*stopping, while she goes up the steps*]. Yes, sometimes I envy him. You see, when a man has succeeded too well in life, he is not unlikely to feel — dear me! without having committed any very serious wrong! — a multitudinous disgust of himself, the sum of which does not constitute a real remorse, but an obscure uneasiness; and a ducal mantle, while it sweeps up the stairs of greatness, may trail in its furry lining a rustling of sere illusions and regrets, as, when you slowly climb toward those doors, your black gown trails the withered leaves.

ROXANE [*ironical*]. Are you not unusually pensive? . . .

DE GUICHE. Ah, yes! [*As he is about to leave, abruptly*] Monsieur Le Bret! [*To* ROXANE] Will you allow me? A word. [*He goes to* LE BRET, *and lowering his voice*] It is true that no one will dare overtly to attack your friend, but many have him in particular disrelish; and some one was saying to me yesterday, at the Queen's, "It seems not unlikely that this Cyrano will meet with an accident."

LE BRET. Ah? . . .

DE GUICHE. Yes. Let him keep indoors. Let him be cautious.

LE BRET [*lifting his arms toward Heaven*]. Cautious! . . . He is coming here. I will warn him. Warn him! . . . Yes, but . . .

ROXANE [*who has been standing at the head of the steps, to a* NUN *who comes toward her*]. What is it?

THE NUN. Ragueneau begs to see you, Madame.

ROXANE. Let him come in. [*To* DE GUICHE *and* LE BRET] He comes to plead distress. Having determined one day to be an author, he became in turn precentor . . .

LE BRET. Bath-house keeper . . .

ROXANE. Actor . . .

LE BRET. Beadle . . .

ROXANE. Barber . . .

LE BRET. Arch-lute teacher . . .

ROXANE. I wonder what he is now! RAGUENEAU [*entering precipitately*]. Ah, Madame! [*He sees* LE BRET] Monsieur!

ROXANE [*smiling*]. Begin telling your misfortunes to Le Bret. I am coming back.

RAGUENEAU. But, Madame . . .

[ROXANE *leaves without listening, with the* DUKE. RAGUENEAU *goes to* LE BRET]

RAGUENEAU. It is better so. Since you are here, I had liefer not tell her! Less than half an hour ago, I was going to see your friend. I was not thirty feet from his door, when I saw him come out. I hurried to catch up with him. He was about to turn the corner. I started to run, when from a window below which he was passing — was it pure mischance? It may have been! — a lackey drops a block of wood . . .

LE BRET. Ah, the cowards! . . . Cyrano!

RAGUENEAU. I reach the spot, and find him . . .

LE BRET. Horrible!

RAGUENEAU. Our friend, Monsieur, our poet, stretched upon the ground, with a great hole in his head!

LE BRET. He is dead?

RAGUENEAU. No, but . . . God have mercy! I carried him to his lodging . . . Ah, his lodging! You should see that lodging of his!

LE BRET. Is he in pain?

RAGUENEAU. No, Monsieur, he is unconscious.

LE BRET. Has a doctor seen him?

RAGUENEAU. One came . . . out of good nature.

LE BRET. My poor, poor Cyrano! . . . We must not tell Roxane outright. And the doctor? . . .

RAGUENEAU. He talked . . . I hardly grasped . . . of fever . . . cerebral inflammation! Ah, if you should see him, with his head done up in cloths! . . . Let us hurry . . . No one is there to tend him . . . And he might diè if he attempted to get up!

LE BRET [*dragging* RAGUENEAU *off at the right*]. This way. Come, it is shorter through the chapel.

ROXANE [*appearing at the head of the steps, catching sight of* LE BRET *hurrying off through the colonnade which leads to the chapel side-door*]. Monsieur Le Bret! [LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *make their escape without answering*] Le Bret not turning back when he is called? . . . Poor Ragueneau must be in some new trouble! [*She comes down the steps*] How beautiful . . . how beautiful, this golden-hazy waning day of September at its wane! My sorrowful mood, which the exuberant gladness of April offends, Autumn, the dreamy and subdued, lures on to smile . . . [*She sits down at her embroidery frame. Two* NUNS *come from the house bringing a large armchair which they place under the tree*] Ah, here comes the classic armchair in which my old friend always sits!

SISTER MARTHA. The best in the convent parlor!

ROXANE. I thank you, sister. [*The* NUNS *withdraw*] He will be here in a moment. [*She adjusts the embroidery frame before her*] There! The clock is striking . . . My wools! . . . The clock has struck? . . . I wonder at this! . . . Is it possible that for the first time he is late? . . . It must be that the sister who keeps the door . . . my thimble? ah, here it is! . . . is detaining him to exhort him to repentance . . . [*A pause*] She exhorts him at some length! . . . He cannot be much longer . . . A withered leaf! [*She brushes away the dead leaf which has dropped on the embroidery*] Surely nothing could keep . . . My scissors? . . . in my work-bag! . . . could keep him from coming!

A NUN [*appearing at the head of the steps*]. Monsieur de Bergerac!

ROXANE [*without turning round*]. What was I saying? . . . [*She begins to embroider.* CYRANO *appears, exceedingly pale, his hat drawn down over his eyes. The* NUN *who has shown him into the garden, withdraws. He comes down the steps very slowly, with evident difficulty to keep on his feet, leaning heavily on his cane.* ROXANE *proceeds with her sewing*] Ah, these dull soft shades! . . . How shall I match them? [*To* CYRANO, *in a tone of friendly chiding*] After fourteen years, for the first time you are late!

CYRANO [*who has reached the armchair and seated himself, in a jolly voice which contrasts with his face*]. Yes, it seems incredible! I am savage at it. I was detained, spite of all I could do! . . .

ROXANE. By? . . .

CYRANO. A somewhat inopportune call.

ROXANE [*absent-minded, sewing*]. Ah, yes . . . some troublesome fellow!

CYRANO. Cousin, it was a troublesome Madam.

ROXANE. You excused yourself?

CYRANO. Yes. I said, "Your pardon, but this is Saturday, on which day I am due in certain dwelling. On no account do I ever fail. Come back in an hour!"

ROXANE [*lightly*]. Well, she will have to wait some time to see you. I shall not let you go before evening.

CYRANO. Perhaps . . . I shall have to go a little earlier. [*He closes his eyes and is silent a moment*]

[SISTER MARTHA *is seen crossing the park from the chapel to the terrace.* ROXANE *sees her and beckons to her by a slight motion of her head*]

ROXANE [*to* CYRANO]. Are you not going to tease Sister Martha to-day?

CYRANO [*quickly, opening his eyes*]. I am indeed! [*In a comically gruff voice*] Sister Martha, come nearer! [*The* NUN *demurely comes toward him*] Ha! ha! ha! Beautiful eyes, ever studying the ground!

SISTER MARTHA [*lifting her eyes and smiling*]. But . . . [*She sees his face and makes a gesture of surprise*] Oh!

CYRANO [*low, pointing at* ROXANE]. Hush! . . . It is nothing! [*In a swaggering voice, aloud*] Yesterday, I ate meat!

SISTER MARTHA. I am sure you did! [*Aside*] That is why he is so pale! [*Quickly, low*] Come to the refectory presently. I shall have ready for you there a good bowl of broth . . . You will come!

CYRANO. Yes, yes, yes.

SISTER MARTHA. Ah, you are more reasonable to-day!

ROXANE [*hearing them whisper*]. She is trying to convert you?

SISTER MARTHA. Indeed I am not!

CYRANO. It is true, you, usually almost discursive in the holy cause, are reading me no sermon! You amaze me! [*With comical fury*] I will amaze you, too! Listen, you are authorized . . . [*With the air of casting about in his mind, and finding the jest he wants*] Ah, now I shall amaze you! to . . . pray for me, this evening . . . in the chapel.

ROXANE. Oh! oh!

CYRANO [*laughing*]. Sister Martha . . . lost in amazement!

SISTER MARTHA [*gently*]. I did not wait for your authorization. [*She goes in*]

CYRANO [*turning to* ROXANE, *who is bending over her embroidery*]. The devil, tapestry . . . the devil, if I hope to live to see the end of you!

ROXANE. I was waiting for that jest.

[*A slight gust of wind makes the leaves fall*]

CYRANO. The leaves!

ROXANE [*looking up from her work and gazing off toward the avenues*]. They are the russet gold of a Venetian beauty's hair . . . Watch them fall!

CYRANO. How consummately they do it! In that brief fluttering from bough to ground, how they contrive still to put beauty! And though foredoomed to moulder upon the earth that draws them, they wish their fall invested with the grace of a free bird's flight!

ROXANE. Serious, you?

CYRANO [*remembering himself*]. Not at all, Roxane!

ROXANE. Come, never mind the falling leaves! Tell me the news, instead . . . Where is my budget?

CYRANO. Here it is!

ROXANE. Ah!

CYRANO [*growing paler and paler, and struggling with pain*]. Saturday, the nineteenth: The King having filled his dish eight times with Cette preserves, and emptied it, was taken with a fever; his distemper, for high treason, was condemned to be let blood, and now the royal pulse is rid of febriculosity! On Sunday: at the Queen's great ball, were burned seven hundred and sixty-three wax candles; our troops, it is said, defeated Austrian John; four sorcerers were hanged; Madame Athis's little dog had a distressing turn, the case called for a. . . .

ROXANE. Monsieur de Bergerac, leave out the little dog!

CYRANO. Monday, . . . nothing, or next to it: Lygdamire took a fresh lover.

ROXANE. Oh!

CYRANO [*over whose face is coming a change more and more marked*]. Tuesday: the whole Court assembled at Fontainebleau. Wednesday, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "No!" Thursday, Mancini, Queen of France, . . . : or little less. Twenty-fifth, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "Yes!" And Saturday, the twenty-sixth . . . [*He closes his eyes. His head drops on his breast. Silence*]

ROXANE [*surprised at hearing nothing further, turns, looks at him and starts to her feet in alarm*]. Has he fainted? [*She runs to him, calling*] Cyrano!

CYRANO [*opening his eyes, in a faint voice*]. What is it? . . . What is the matter! [*He sees* ROXANE *bending over him, hurriedly readjusts his hat, pulling it more closely over his head, and shrinks back in his armchair in terror*] No! no! I assure you, it is nothing! . . . Do not mind me!

ROXANE. But surely . . .

CYRANO. It is merely the wound I received at Arras . . . Sometimes . . . you know . . . even now . . .

ROXANE. Poor friend!

CYRANO. But it is nothing . . . It will pass . . . [*He smiles with effort*] It has passed.

ROXANE. Each one of us has his wound: I too have mine. It is here, never to heal, that ancient wound . . . [*She places her hand on her breast*] It is here, beneath the yellowing letter on which are still faintly visible tear-drops and drops of blood!

[*The light is beginning to grow less*]

CYRANO. His letter? . . . Did you not once say that some day . . . you might show it to me?

ROXANE. Ah! . . . Do you wish? . . . His letter?

CYRANO. Yes . . . to-day . . . I wish to . . .

ROXANE [*handing him the little bag from her neck*]. Here!

CYRANO. I may open it?

ROXANE. Open it . . . read! [*She goes back to her embroidery frame, folds it up, orders her wools*]

CYRANO. "Good-by, Roxane! I am going to die!"

ROXANE [*stopping in astonishment*]. You are reading it aloud?

CYRANO [*reading*]. "It is fated to come this evening, beloved, I believe! My soul is heavy, oppressed with love it had not time to utter . . . and now

Time is at end! Never again, never again shall my worshipping eyes . . ."

ROXANE. How strangely you read his letter!

CYRANO [*continuing*]. " . . . whose passionate revel it was, kiss in its fleeting grace your every gesture. One, usual to you, of tucking back a little curl, comes to my mind . . . and I cannot refrain from crying out . . ."

ROXANE. How strangely you read his letter! . . .

[*The darkness gradually increases*]

CYRANO. ". . . and I cry out: Good-by!"

ROXANE. You read it . . .

CYRANO. ". . . my dearest, my darling, . . . my treasure . . ."

ROXANE. . . . in a voice . . .

CYRANO. ". . . my love! . . ."

ROXANE. . . . in a voice . . . a voice which I am not hearing for the first time!

[ROXANE *comes quietly nearer to him, without his seeing it; she steps behind his armchair, bends noiselessly over his shoulder, looks at the letter. The darkness deepens*]

CYRANO. ". . . My heart never desisted for a second from your side . . . and I am and shall be in the world that has no end, the one who loved you without measure, the one . . ."

ROXANE [*laying her hand on his shoulder*]. How can you go on reading? It is dark. [CYRANO *starts, and turns round; sees her close to him, makes a gesture of dismay and hangs his head. Then, in the darkness which has completely closed round them, she says slowly, clasping her hands*] And he, for fourteen years, has played the part of the comical old friend who came to cheer me!

CYRANO. Roxane!

ROXANE. So it was you.

CYRANO. No, no, Roxane!

ROXANE. I ought to have divined it, if only by the way in which he speaks my name!

CYRANO. No, it was not I!

ROXANE. So it was you!

CYRANO. I swear to you . . .

ROXANE. Ah, I detect at last the whole generous imposture: The letters . . . were yours!

CYRANO. No!

ROXANE. The tender fancy, the dear folly, . . . yours!

CYRANO. No!

ROXANE. The voice in the night, was yours!

CYRANO. I swear to you that it was not!

ROXANE. The soul . . . was yours!

CYRANO. I did not love you, no!

ROXANE. And you loved me!

CYRANO. Not I . . . it was the other!

ROXANE. You loved me!

CYRANO. No!

ROXANE. Already your denial comes more faintly!

CYRANO. No, no, my darling love, I did not love you!

ROXANE. Ah, how many things within the hour have died . . . how many have been born! Why, why have been silent these long years, when on this letter, in which he had no part, the tears were yours?

CYRANO [*handing her the letter*]. Because . . . the blood was his.

ROXANE. Then why let the sublime bond of this silence be loosed to-day?

CYRANO. Why?

[LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *enter running*]

LE BRET. Madness! Monstrous madness! . . . Ah, I was sure of it! There he is!

CYRANO. [*smiling and straightening himself*]. *Tiens!* Where else?

LE BRET. Madame, he is likely to have got his death by getting out of bed!

ROXANE. Merciful God! A moment ago, then . . . that faintness . . . that . . .?

CYRANO. It is true. I had not finished telling you the news. And on Saturday, the twenty-sixth, an hour after sundown, Monsieur de Bergerac died of murder done upon him. [*He takes off his hat; his head is seen wrapped in bandages*]

ROXANE. What is he saying?. . . Cyrano? . . . Those bandages about his head? . . . Ah, what have they done to you? . . . Why? . . .

CYRANO. "Happy who falls, cut off by a hero, with an honest sword through his heart!" I am quoting from myself! . . . Fate will have his laugh at us! . . . Here am I killed, in a trap, from behind, by a lackey, with a log! Nothing could be completer! In my whole life I shall have not had anything I wanted . . . not even a decent death!

RAGUENEAU. Ah, Monsieur! . . .

CYRANO. Ragueneau, do not sob like that! [*Holding out his hand to him*] And what is the news with you, these latter days, fellow-poet?

RAGUENEAU [*through his tears*]. I am candle-snuffer at Molière's theatre.

CYRANO. Molière!

RAGUENEAU. But I intend to leave no later than to-morrow. Yes, I am indignant! Yesterday, they were giving Scapin, and I saw that he has appropriated a scene of yours.

LE BRET. A whole scene?

RAGUENEAU. Yes, Monsieur. The one in which occurs the famous "What the devil was he doing in . . ."

LE BRET. Molière has taken that from you!

CYRANO. Hush! hush! He did well to take it! [*To* RAGUENEAU] The scene was very effective, was it not?

RAGUENEAU. Ah, monsieur, the public laughed . . . laughed!

CYRANO. Yes, to the end, I shall have been the one who prompted . . . and was forgotten! [*To* ROXANE] Do you remember that evening on which Christian spoke to you from below the balcony? There was the epitome of my life: while I have stood below in darkness, others have climbed to gather the kiss and glory! It is well done, and on the brink of my grave I approve it: Molière has genius . . . Christian was a fine fellow! [*At this moment, the chapel bell having rung, the* NUNS *are seen passing at the back, along the avenue, on their way to service*] Let them hasten to their prayers . . . the bell is summoning them . . .

ROXANE [*rising and calling*]. Sister! Sister!

CYRANO [*holding her back*]. No! No! do not leave me to fetch anybody! When you came back I might not be here to rejoice . . . [*The* NUNS *have gone into the chapel; the organ is heard*] I longed for a little music . . . it comes in time!

ROXANE. I love you . . . you shall live!

CYRANO. No! for it is only in the fairy-tale that the shy and awkward prince when he hears the beloved say "I love you!" feels his ungainliness melt and drop from him in the sunshine of those words! . . . But you would always know full well, dear Heart, that there had taken place in your poor slave no beautifying change!

ROXANE. I have hurt you . . . I have wrecked your life, I! . . . I!

CYRANO. You? . . . The reverse! Woman's sweetness I had never known. My mother . . . thought me unflattering. I had no sister. Later, I shunned Love's cross-road in fear of mocking eyes. To you I owe having had, at least among the gentle and fair, a friend. Thanks to you there has passed across my life the rustle of a woman's gown.

LE BRET [*calling his attention to the moonlight peering through the branches*]. Your other friend, among the gentle and fair, is there . . . she comes to see you!

CYRANO [*smiling to the moon*]. I see her!

ROXANE. I never loved but one . . . and twice I lose him!

CYRANO. Le Bret, I shall ascend into the opalescent moon, without need this time of a flying-machine!

ROXANE. What are you saying?

CYRANO. Yes, it is there, you may be sure, I shall be sent for my Paradise. More than one soul of those I have loved must be apportioned there . . . There I shall find Socrates and Galileo!

LE BRET [*in revolt*]. No! No! It is too senseless, too cruel, too unfair! So true a poet! So great a heart! To die . . . like this! To die! . . .

CYRANO. As ever . . . Le Bret is grumbling!

LE BRET [*bursting into tears*]. My friend! My friend!

CYRANO [*lifting himself, his eyes wild*]. There are the Gascony Cadets! . . . Man in the gross . . . Eh, yes! . . . the weakness of the weakest point . . .

LE BRET. Learned . . . even in his delirium!

CYRANO. Copernicus said . . .

ROXANE. Oh!

CYRANO. But what the devil was he doing . . . and what the devil was he doing in that galley?

> Philosopher and physicist,
> Musician, rhymester, duellist,
> Explorer of the upper blue,
> Retorter apt with point and point,
> Lover as well, — not for his peace!
> Here lies Hercule Savinien
> De Cyrano de Bergerac,
> Who was everything . . . but of account!

But, your pardons, I must go . . . I wish to keep no one waiting . . . See, a moonbeam, come to take me home! [*He has dropped in his chair;* ROXANE'S *weeping calls him back to reality; he looks at her and gently stroking her mourning veil*] I do not wish . . . in-

deed, I do not wish . . . that you should sorrow less for Christian, the comely and the kind! Only I wish that when the everlasting cold shall have seized upon my fibres, this funereal veil should have a twofold meaning, and the mourning you wear for him be worn for me too . . . a little!

ROXANE. I promise . . .

CYRANO [*seized with a great shivering, starts to his feet*]. Not there! No! Not in an elbow-chair! [*All draw nearer to help him*] Let no one stay me! No one! [*He goes and stands against the tree*] Nothing but this tree! [*Silence*] She comes, Mors, the indiscriminate Madam! . . . Already I am booted with marble . . . gauntleted with lead! [*He stiffens himself*] Ah, since she is now on her way, I will await her standing . . . [*He draws his sword*] Sword in hand!

LE BRET. Cyrano!

ROXANE [*swooning*]. Cyrano!

[*All start back, terrified*]

CYRANO. I believe she is looking at me . . . that she dares to look at my nose, the bony baggage who has none! [*He raises his sword*] What are you saying? That it is no use? . . . I know it! But one does not fight because there is hope of winning! No! . . . no! . . . it is much finer to fight when it is no use! . . . What are all those? You are a thousand strong? . . . Ah, I know you now . . . all my ancient enemies! . . . Hypocrisy? . . . [*He beats with his sword, in the vacancy*] Take this! and this! Ha! Ha! Compromises? . . . and Prejudices? and dastardly Expedients? [*He strikes*] That I should come to terms, I? . . . Never! Never! . . . Ah, you are there too, you bloated and pompous Silliness! I know full well that you will lay me low at last . . . No matter: whilst I have breath, I will fight you, I will fight you, I will fight you! [*He waves his sword in great sweeping circles, and stops, panting*] Yes, you have wrested from me everything, laurel as well as rose . . . Work your wills! . . . Spite of your worst, something will still be left me to take whither I go . . . and to-night when I enter God's house, in saluting, broadly will I sweep the azure threshold with what despite of all I carry forth unblemished and unbent . . . [*he starts forward, with lifted sword*] . . . and that is . . . [*The sword falls from his hands, he staggers, drops in the arms of* LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU]

ROXANE [*bending over him and kissing his forehead*]. That is? . . .

CYRANO [*opens his eyes again, recognizes her and says with a smile*] . . . My plume!

THE END

THE VULTURES

(*1882*)

By Henry Becque

LOVERS

(*1895*)

By Maurice Donnay

HENRY BECQUE AND "THE VULTURES"; MAURICE DONNAY AND "LOVERS"

THE DRAMA OF THE FRENCH

The American stage is very rarely given a French play that is not so modified by translation and adaptation as to be almost unrecognizable by comparison with the original. In fact, it was not until Professor Brander Matthews, because of his personal sympathy with the French drama, wrote his serviceable volume of essays, "French Dramatists of the 19th Century", that the American reading public became at all familiar with the schools of Scribe, Augier and Dumas *fils;* and since that time there has not been that increase in interest for modern French drama that there has been for the drama of central Europe, Russia, Italy or Spain. French movements in the theatre and French theories of dramaturgy have called for our profoundest consideration; French critics of the theatre have also awakened our admiration. But there seems to be a gulf between the Gallic viewpoint and that of the Anglo-Saxon in drama; they seem to make a virtue of that which we fail to sympathize with, and their social structure is so intensively interesting to them, outside the universal characteristics and psychologies of life, that a French drama is a special case with us, where certain conditions have to be accepted before the artistry of French living is understood.

When we speak of modern French drama, we mean the drama which ushered in or was abetted by the establishment of the Théâtre Libre — the drama that has advanced beyond the period of Scribe and Augier and yet which does not quite escape their influence in architectonics. The development of that institution and the forces that gave rise to it have been traced by me in my "Representative One-Act Plays by Continental Authors." To understand rightly its force, some clear understanding must be reached as to the influence of Scribe, Augier, and Dumas *fils*, Sardou and Sarcey on the technique of drama: life in terms of action, structure as governing life in a play. Then, with the advent of Balzac and his Comédie Humaine, de Musset, Daudet, and finally Émile Zola, came the full meaning of the naturalistic school, upon which Antoine at first flourished. And it was here, at this moment, that Henry Becque (1837–1899) carried French drama away from the mechanism of Scribe. Writes Thalasso, in his "Le Théâtre Libre", "Uncompromising enemy of the comedy of intrigue, he Becque has broken the conventional mold which for so long a time gripped theatrical thought." In other words he brought the drama back to life.

In the minds of American theatregoers, modern French drama is largely represented by the names of Brieux, Hervieu, and Bernstein. I think the former became differentiated largely on the recommendation of Bernard Shaw, and yet "The Incubus" ("Les Hanneton" and "The Three Daughters of M. Dupont" were outside our sympathy, while "Damaged Goods" ("Les Avariés") and "Maternity" — fathered by medical societies — rode into acceptance on the high wave of the so-

ciological and thesis play. We have also seen "The Red Robe", where legal abuse was sufficiently near our sympathy to make it understandable.

Paul Hervieu has suffered more than Brieux in the lack of comprehension shown by American audiences. I recall "The Labyrinth", "The Awakening", "Know Thyself", and "The Passing of the Torch", but his psychology of love situations is so purely French that these plays did not succeed. Henry Bernstein, more avowedly theatrical, has been adapted for the American stage, and his "great scenes", as found for example in the culmination of "The Thief", are reasons sufficient for their hold on audiences. But one has felt that in the adaptations of Bernstein — "Israel", "Samson" and "The Thief" — we have been given only Americanizations, meaning lack of frankness. Even the excellent work of Mr. David Belasco in "The Secret" was more Mr. Belasco than Bernstein.

The modern French drama, however, comprises the names of men even more significant than these in France, yet less known in America; for instance, Henri Lavedan, Jules Lemaître, and Maurice Donnay, represented in a volume of translations, "Three Modern Plays from the French", by Barrett H. Clark. Of Lavedan, "Catherine", "The Duel", and "Sire" have been given American productions; and I recall Donnay's "The Return of Jerusalem", freely adapted for Madame Simone, by Owen Johnston. Of Henry Becque, however, the American stage has still to learn. It is strange that "The Vultures" escaped adaptation, since one can understand its main theme, which, though it may condition things different from American family life, has sharp and individual characterization within the American range. Surely Brieux must have recalled it while writing his "The Three Daughters of M. Dupont."

Considering the history of the modern French stage, such sparse productions would indicate the gulf between French accomplishment and American appreciation. Capus, Porte-Riche, Bataille are mere names to us. Those whom Antoine encouraged, like Ancey, Curel, Ajalbert, Jullien, and Céard are even less familiar. The French stage is insular in its subject-matter and its problems; it is as ignorant of Anglo-Saxon taste as we are of the French art of life, which has a distinct convention in its unconventionality. Mr. Clark talked with many of the modern French dramatists on this separate interest which keeps the French stage aloof from us; and the responses accorded him are contained in his entertaining book on "Contemporary French Dramatists." He seems to lay the difference to the insidious Puritan in us, which prevents us from facing life sincerely, though conditions, under cover, may be similar to what they are in Paris. He asks indirectly, Could an American playwright have written Donnay's "Amants"? And here is what he says wisely about the area of French interest, so typically local:

"As a rule . . . we shall find the French dramatist somewhat narrow both in subject-matter and treatment, but on the other hand we shall observe an intensification, a power of concentrating upon character, and a technical facility of the highest order."

I have selected for the present collection Henry Becque's "Les Corbeaux" as bearing a significance equal to the plays of Ibsen. Everywhere it is recognized as one of the world's representative dramas. With it began a new era in French drama, just as also did "Hernani" and "La Dame aux Camélias" open new eras. A long commentary of critical notes by Sarcey, Pellissier, and Brisson might be gathered about it. I would refer the reader to a close analysis of the play in Ambroise Got's "Henry Becque: Sa Vie et Son Oeuvre." The dialogue of the piece is direct in style, re-

lentless in its small detail, satirical in its social point of view, ugly in its impression; but in every respect truthful in presentment and fearless in conclusion. Got writes:

"*L'évolution de Henry Becque est curieuse; il débute au théâtre par un livret d'opéra, il produit ensuite un vaudeville à la manière de Labiche, puis un drame à idées d'allure romantique dans lequel ses facultés lyriques se donnent libre essor; peu à peu, par un travail énorme, en observant la vie et en relisant Molière, comme le dit Augustin Filon, il se débarrasse de tout le fatras romantique, de tout le conventionnel faux et désuet de l'ancienne école; après avoir longtemps cherché, longtemps tâtonné, il trouve enfin la voie dont il ne s'écartera plus.*"

Becque was born in Paris, April 9, 1837. He studied at the lycée Condorcet (then the lycée Bonaparte), where he had as his classmate Said Carnot, the future President of the French Republic. He then obtained a government position for which his temperament was ill suited, but which his bourgeois family delighted in because of its assured compensation. But Becque's whole inclination, according to his biographer, was not for the Bureau or the Bourse; rather was it for literature and the theatre. He began with the operetta, "Sardanapale" (Théâtre Lyrique, February 8, 1867). Of these days one reads in Becque's "Souvenirs d'un Auteur Dramatique" (1895). Having written, in 1868, "L'Enfant Prodigue", he tried in every way he could through it to gain the encouragement of Sarcey, who finally read the piece for the directors of the Vaudeville; it was accepted and played on November 6, 1868. Then followed "Michel Pauper", taken by the Odéon, and held for a year and a half, when Becque withdrew it and gave it to the Théâtre de la Porte-St.-Martin, where it was produced, June 17, 1870.

Then came the war of 1870 when, like Daudet and Claretie, he became a soldier, and used his pen, as he had previously done, to air his political opinions, and wrote a play, "Enlèvement", which failed miserably. In 1876 he became dramatic critic for the *People*, changing thereafter to several other journals, among them the *Matin*. In 1888, he was writing for the *Figaro*. The fact that between 1876 and 1888 he wrote for seven different journals is indicative, as his biographer asserts, of Becque's restless spirit.

A comedy, "La Navette", was presented at the Gymnase on November 16, 1878, and a curtain-raiser, "Les Honnêtes Femmes" was given at the same theatre, January 1, 1880. His greatest work, "Les Corbeaux", had a production at the Comédie-Française, September 14, 1882, followed in 1885 (February 7) by "La Parisienne" at the Renaissance. Becque's struggles for recognition were arduous; theatre after theatre would have nothing to do with him. "Les Corbeaux", like many a great piece before it, was refused everywhere. The dramatist's point of view, his fearlessness, his ironical drabness, called forth the ire of the critics.

By now his best work had been done. Except for "Les Polichinelles", the theatre saw nothing of his, and he took sixteen years to write that. Then it was left unfinished. At his death, May 13, 1899, "Les Corbeaux" was again revived at the Odéon, and "La Parisienne" at the Théâtre Antoine.

There was nothing soft or gentle about Becque; his satire, his pessimism, raised a storm of protest; he did not gild the lily, but regarded life from the angle current in the Paris of his day. Money was the great absorber of ideals to him, the great curse of the time; the base motives attached to this were those he showed up so relentlessly. "Les Corbeaux" is saturated with the theme. So are "Les Honnêtes Femmes" and "Les Polichinelles." What does Becque write in his "Querelles Littéraires:"

"*On ne dira jamais tout le mal qui nous est venu des Affaires, et je ne parle pas seulement des ruines privées, des désastres d'honneur et d'argent ensevelis dans chaque maison. Ce sont bien les affaires, les juives et les autres, qui nous ont perdus. Elles ont corrompu notre vieux pays de France, qui avait vécu jusque-là le front haut et les mains nettes. Elles ont démoralisé la nation, toutes les parties de la nation.*"

Becque, the critic, was as fearless, as outspoken, as Becque, the dramatist.

Maurice Donnay also came from bourgeois stock. Both he and the earlier Becque found congenial the spirit of the "Chat Noir", the cabaret centre, which, like later centres in the progess of modern continental drama, was the forerunner of the free theatre movement in Paris. Donnay was born October 12, 1859. He went to the Lycée Louis le-Grand, and to the École Centrale, and, despite his predilections, he obeyed the desire of his parents and studied civil engineering. But, in 1889, he fell from grace because he dared to write and recite some graceful pieces which found favor with the patrons of the "Chat Noir." His first play, "Lysistrata", was produced in December, 1892. Its theme was based on Aristophanes, seasoned with Gallic wit. It won recognition. This was followed, in 1894, by "Pension de Famille." In 1895 came "Amants", which established Donnay as a dramatist. Read this play, and with it "L'Autre Danger" (1902) and "La Douloureuse" (1897), and one can measure the truth of Roger Le Brun's estimate of Donnay's work:

"*L'Idée — l'idée maîtresse — dans le Théâtre de Donnay c'était, en somme, ceci: que l'amour, de par les conventions sociales, la plupart hypocritement déguisées par un sentimentalisme puérile, est mis au service des plus bas appétits comme des sentiments les plus factices, avili par le mensonge, la ruse, l'avidité des hommes, dévoyé de son véritable but pour des besognes contraires à sa nature, participant à toutes nos vilenies comme une chose monstrueuse et néfaste, et que lutter contre un tel usage d'un sentiment si noble et si utile en soi devait nécessairement aboutir, après la lutte, à plus de bonheur humain.*"

Among his many plays, "La Clairière" (1900), written in conjunction with Lucien Descaves, was given at the Théâtre Antoine, April 6, 1900. In April, 1922, Donnay and Chevrillon, both members of the French Academy, came to America as representatives to the Centenary Celebration of Molière, just at the moment there was given in Paris at the Théâtre Variétiés, Donnay's newest play, "Belle Angevine." It was appropriate that he should be a representative at such an anniversary, since he wrote a drama, "Le Menage de Molière", presented at the Comédie-Française in 1912.

THE VULTURES
(*LES CORBEAUX*)

(*1882*)

A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

By HENRY BECQUE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY FREEMAN TILDEN

CHARACTERS

VIGNERON . . . . . *A manufacturer*
TEISSIER . . . . *Formerly a small banker, now Vigneron's partner*
BOURDON . . . . . *A lawyer*
MERCKENS . . . . . *A music-teacher*
LEFORT . . . . . *An architect*
DUPUIS . . . . . *A dealer in house furnishings*
GASTON . . . . . *Vigneron's son*
AUGUSTE
A DOCTOR
GEORGE DE SAINT-GENIS
LENORMAND
GENERAL FROMENTIN
MRS. VIGNERON
MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS
MARIE
BLANCHE
JUDITH
ROSALIE } *Vigneron's daughters*

The action takes place at Paris in our own day

COPYRIGHT, 1913,
BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

THE VULTURES

ACT I

A luxuriously furnished drawing-room. There are three double doors at the rear, and double doors on the sides. At the right, in the foreground, there is a piano; and at the left, against the wall, a writing-table. Behind this writing-table is a fireplace. At the rear, on the right, a table; at the left, in the foreground, a couch. Other furniture, mirrors, flowers, etc. When the curtain rises, VIGNERON *is seen asleep on the couch. He is in a dressing-gown, and has a newspaper in his hands.* MARIE, *seated near him, is engaged in needle-work.* JUDITH *is at the piano.* BLANCHE *is writing at the table.*

MRS. VIGNERON. Don't play any more, Judith; your father is asleep. [*Going over to the table*] Blanche.

BLANCHE. Yes, mama.

MRS. VIGNERON. Is it finished?

BLANCHE. Just one minute.

MRS. VIGNERON. Have you gone over them? How many will there be at table?

BLANCHE. Sixteen.

MRS. VIGNERON. That's good. [*She brings a chair and sits down beside* BLANCHE]

BLANCHE. Do you think the dinner will be any better for putting a menu at each plate?

MRS. VIGNERON. It won't be any the worse for it, anyhow.

BLANCHE. What a queer custom! But are you quite sure it is the proper thing?

MRS. VIGNERON. Absolutely sure. I saw it in the Ladies' Home Companion.

BLANCHE. Shall we run over the places together?

MRS. VIGNERON. Let's go over the list first. Mrs. Saint-Genis?

BLANCHE. I've got her down.

MRS. VIGNERON. Her son?

BLANCHE. You needn't be afraid of my forgetting him.

MRS. VIGNERON. Father Mouton?

BLANCHE. The dear old man! He baptized me, and confirmed me — and now he is going to marry me.

MRS. VIGNERON. If you are going to gossip about every name we come to, we won't be through by next week. Mr. Teissier?

BLANCHE. I've got him down. I could get along very well without him, though.

VIGNERON [*waking*]. What's that I hear? Is Miss Blanche giving orders in my house?

BLANCHE. Goodness, yes, papa; it's little Blanche.

VIGNERON. And may we know what Mr. Teissier has done to you, miss?

BLANCHE. To me? Nothing. But he is old, and ugly, and boorish, and a miser. And he never looks anybody in the face; that's reason enough why I don't like him around me.

VIGNERON. Fine! Bully! I'll fix things all right. Mrs. Vigneron, you needn't save a place at the table for this young lady. She is going to have dinner in her room.

BLANCHE. You'll be saying soon that the wedding will go ahead without me.

VIGNERON. If you say another word, you sha'n't be married — Oh! [*A pause*]

MARIE [*rising*]. Listen, daddy dear, and give me a serious answer — which you never do when anybody speaks to you about your health. How do you feel?

VIGNERON. Oh, not bad.

MARIE. But your face is red.

VIGNERON. Red! That'll go away as soon as I get outdoors.

MARIE. If your dizziness comes back, we shall have to call in a doctor.

VIGNERON. A doctor! Do you want me to die?

MARIE. You know that kind of joking hurts me. We won't talk any more about it. [*She starts away, and he catches her by the bottom of her gown and pulls her down into his arms*]

VIGNERON. Does she love her old daddy?

MARIE. I love you so, so, so much . . . but you don't do a thing I want you to, or a thing you should do. Why don't you work less, get some fun out of your money, and look out for yourself when you are sick?

VIGNERON. But I am not sick, little girl. I know what's the matter with me. I'm a bit tired, and there's too much blood in my head. It's just the same every year about this time, after I have finished taking inventory. The inventory of the house of Teissier, Vigneron and Company! Do you know what Teissier and I were offered for our factory, only a week ago? Six hundred thousand francs!

MARIE. Well, sell it.

VIGNERON. Ten years from now, I am going to sell for a million. And in the meantime it will bring us in that much.

MARIE. How old will you be then?

VIGNERON. How old? Ten years from now? I shall be just the age of my grandchildren; and we shall have fine times together. [AUGUSTE *enters*] What is it, Auguste?

AUGUSTE. Your architect, sir. He wants only a word with you.

VIGNERON. Tell Mr. Lefort if he wants to speak to me he should see me at the factory.

AUGUSTE. He has just come from there, sir.

VIGNERON. Let him go back there. I am at home here, with my wife and children, and I sha'n't be bothered by my contractors. [AUGUSTE *goes out*] Let me get up. [MARIE *steps aside;* VIGNERON *rises with an effort; then he is seized with dizziness and walks a few steps unsteadily*]

MARIE [*returning to him*]. Why won't you see a doctor?

VIGNERON. Isn't that question settled?

MARIE. No; it is not settled. There's no use talking — you are not well, and it makes me uneasy. Take care of yourself; do something; perhaps a little dieting for seven or eight days would make you all right again.

VIGNERON. Sly puss! I see through you and your little dieting. I eat too much, eh? Come, speak right out; I don't mind. I eat too much. Well, little girl, what do you expect? I haven't always had a table full of good things. Ask your mother; she will tell you that when we began keeping house I went to bed many a time without my supper. Now I'm making up for it. It's stupid, beastly, it hurts me, but I can't resist the temptation. [*Leaving* MARIE] And then, I suppose I shouldn't read the newspaper after luncheon; it hurts my digestion. [*He crumples up the newspaper and going back to the couch throws himself upon it; then his glance falls upon* JUDITH, *who, seated at the piano, her back turned to her father, is in a brown study; he tiptoes over to her and shouts in her ear*] Judith!

JUDITH. Oh, father, you know I don't like such jokes!

VIGNERON. Don't be angry, missy, I won't do it again. Judith, tell me something about what's going on — in the moon.

JUDITH. Now make fun of me.

VIGNERON. How do you make that out? I have a daughter named Judith. Is she here? Is she somewhere else? How can I know? We never hear from her.

JUDITH. I haven't anything to say.

VIGNERON. That doesn't bother most people.

JUDITH. What fun is there in teasing me all the time about it? I see you, hear you, love you, and I am happy.

VIGNERON. Are you happy?

JUDITH. Quite.

VIGNERON. Well, then, little girl, you're right and I'm wrong. Have you got a kiss for me?

JUDITH [*rising*]. Have I? A hundred of them, daddy. [*They embrace;* AUGUSTE *enters*]

VIGNERON. Now what is it? I don't seem to be able to kiss my children in peace, nowadays.

AUGUSTE. Mr. Dupuis, sir.

VIGNERON. Dupuis? Dupuis, the house furnisher? What does he want? I settled his bill long ago.

AUGUSTE. Mr. Dupuis stopped in to see if you wished anything, sir.

VIGNERON. Tell Mr. Dupuis for me that I don't buy twice of a swindler like him. Go ahead. [AUGUSTE *goes out;* VIGNERON *walks over to the table*] Well, what have you got your heads together about?

MRS. VIGNERON. Let us alone, that's a dear. We're busy with this evening's dinner.

VIGNERON. Oh! — Come and let me whisper just a few words in your ear. [MRS. VIGNERON *rises and joins her husband at the front of the stage*] So it's all settled that we are going to marry our daughter to that popinjay?

MRS. VIGNERON. Did you interrupt me just to say that?

VIGNERON. Now listen: I haven't any prejudice against this marriage. Mrs. de Saint-Genis impresses me as a first-rate woman. It isn't her fault if she hasn't a cent. Her son is a lovely little boy, very pleasant and polite, and he certainly does curl his hair nicely. For a long while, now, I've hardly been able to keep from telling him that he uses too much hair-oil. His government job carries a good salary with it, for a chap of his age. But at the last moment, I can't help wondering whether this marriage is well-advised, and whether Blanche will be really happy with that young fellow, even if he does belong to one of the oldest families.

MRS. VIGNERON. But Blanche is crazy about him.

VIGNERON. Blanche is only a child. It's easy to see that the first young fellow she met turned her head.

MRS. VIGNERON. What have you got up your sleeve? What's the use of talking that way about a marriage which is done and over with, one might say? You aren't reproaching me, are you, with Mrs. de Saint-Genis' financial position? Ours wasn't always what it is now. Then what are you complaining of? Because George is a good-looking young fellow, well brought up, and of a good family? If he comes from one of the best families, so much the better for him.

VIGNERON. It flatters you to have a son-in-law from one of the oldest families.

MRS. VIGNERON. Yes, I admit it does flatter me; but I wouldn't sacrifice one of my girls to mere vanity. [*Coming nearer and speaking in a lower tone*] Do you want me to tell you the whole truth? It is true that Blanche is a child, as modest and innocent — the dear little girl — as can be; but her feelings are unusually powerful for a girl of her age, and we sha'n't regret having her married early. And then, our friend, Father Mouton, who has known us twenty years, wouldn't interest himself in the marriage if it were not for the best all around.

VIGNERON. Who said he would? But no matter, we are going ahead too fast. In the first place, it isn't a priest's business to make matches. And then, I'd like to have you tell me how it is that Mrs. de Saint-Genis — who hasn't a cent, I repeat — has such good connections. I thought that her son's witnesses would be commonplace people; gracious, she's found some smarter than our own! A high government official and a general! The government official I can account for — George works in his office — but the general!

MRS. VIGNERON. What's that? Oh, the general? Surely, you know that Mr. de Saint-Genis was a captain in the army. Run along to your work, dear. [*She turns away from him*] Blanche, give your father his coat. [*She goes out at the right, leaving the door open behind her*]

VIGNERON [*taking off his dressing-gown and putting on the coat brought by* BLANCHE]. So here you are, you ingrate!

BLANCHE. Ingrate! Why do you call me that?

VIGNERON. Why? Now that we are rich, and are going to let you be married, and give you a dowry, why shouldn't we marry you to Mr. Teissier?

BLANCHE. No, papa.

VIGNERON. "No, papa." Why not? I reckon it's Teissier and his factory that have made me what I am.

BLANCHE. You mean that you have made Mr. Teissier's factory what it is. Without you, it would have cost him money enough; with you, heaven only knows how much money it has brought him in. Now see here, papa, if Mr. Teissier were anybody else — if he were a fair man — here is what he would say, after all the work you have done and the pains you have taken: This factory first belonged to me; then it belonged to both of us; now it belongs to you.

VIGNERON. Her kind little heart puts sentiment into everything. It's a good thing to have sentiment, but not to count too much on other people's having it. [*He kisses her*]

MRS. VIGNERON [*entering*]. What, are you still here?

VIGNERON. Answer this question: Am I under obligations to Teissier, or is Teissier under obligations to me?

MRS. VIGNERON. Neither.

VIGNERON. How is that?

MRS. VIGNERON. Do you really want me to go all over that story again?

VIGNERON. Yes.

MRS. VIGNERON. Well, children, Mr. Teissier was a banker in a small way, on the street where we used to live. We knew him, and yet we didn't. We had been under obligations to him at certain times when we were in need, and he had taken our note without much hesitation, because our reputation was good. Later on, in the course of his business, he found that he had a factory on his hands. He remembered your father and offered him the management, but with a salary. At that time we were getting along pretty well; your father had a good position with a good business house, and the wisest thing to do was to keep it. Fifteen months passed. We had thought nothing more of it for a long time, when one evening at exactly half-past nine — I remember the hour — when your father and I were looking through the door that led into your room, and watching you as you lay asleep, somebody rang. It was Mr. Teissier, and it was the first time he had ever climbed the five flights to our floor. He had made up his mind at last. The truth was, his works were not working, and he came to ask your father to come to his assistance by joining forces with him. Your father thanked him politely and asked him to wait till the following day for an answer. As soon as Mr. Teissier had gone, your father said to me — now listen to this — your father said to me: "Here is an opportunity, my dear. It comes rather late, and just when we are beginning to take things easy. It's going to be a lot of work for me, and you will always be in a state of terror until I make a go of it — if I do make a go of it! But we have four children, and perhaps this is their chance." [*She weeps and clutches her husband's hand; the children gather around them, amid general emotion*] To come back to the question you asked, it seems to me easily answered. Mr. Teissier and Mr. Vigneron went into business together. It was a good thing for both of them, and they are quits.

VIGNERON. There, children! Doesn't your mother tell it well? Pattern after this woman, measure up to her standard, and nothing more can be expected of you. [*He kisses his wife*]

MRS. VIGNERON. You do it beautifully, but it isn't natural to you, my dear. Do you feel ill?

VIGNERON. No, sweetheart; on the contrary, I feel better. I believe I have wholly recovered. Now I am going to ask Miss Judith, the g-r-r-reat musician of the family, to play me something, and then I'll relieve you of my company.

JUDITH. What do you want me to play? *Il Trovatore?*

VIGNERON. Find *Il Trovatore.* [*To* BLANCHE] That's fine, that *Trovatore* piece. Is it by Rossini?

BLANCHE. No; Verdi.

VIGNERON. Oh, Verdi, the author of the *Huguenots.*

BLANCHE. No; the *Huguenots* was written by Meyerbeer.

VIGNERON. That's so. The great Meyerbeer. How old is Meyerbeer, now?

BLANCHE. He's dead.

VIGNERON. What? My goodness, did he die without my knowing it? [*To* JUDITH] Can't you find *Il Trovatore?* Never mind, don't take the trouble to look for it. Listen: play me — just play me — *La Dame Blanche.*

JUDITH. I don't know it.

VIGNERON. You don't know *La Dame Blanche?* Say that again. You don't know —? What's the good, then, of the lessons I'm having you take at ten francs an hour? What *does* your music-teacher teach you? Tell me, now, what *does* he teach you?

JUDITH. He teaches me music.

VIGNERON. Well? Isn't *La Dame Blanche* music?

MARIE [*leading* JUDITH *to the piano*] Come, big sister, play daddy what he wants to hear. [JUDITH *seats herself at the piano and begins the famous selection*]

"From here behold that fair domain
Whose lofty turrets touch the sky;
A strange and spectral chatelaine
Guards that old castle ceaselessly.
Perfidious and faithless knight
Weaving your plots of shame and spite,
Take care!
La Dame Blanche sees you there,
She hears — the woman in white! [1]

[1] Translated by Allan Updegraff. The original:

D'ici voyez ce beau domaine
Dont les créneaux touchant le ciel;
Une invisible châtelaine
Veille en tout temps sur ce castel.
Chevalier félon et méchant
Qui tramez complot malfaisant,
Prenez garde!
La dame blanche vous regarde,
La dame blanche vous entend!

[VIGNERON *begins to sing, then his wife joins him, then his daughters follow suit; half-way throught the verse* GASTON *enters, having first stuck his head in at one of the rear doors. Then* GASTON *goes to the fireplace, takes the shovel and tongs, and contributes to the hubbub*]

VIGNERON [*going toward his son, when the verse is sung*]. Where did you come from, you young rascal? Why weren't you at luncheon with us?

GASTON. I lunched with one of my friends.

VIGNERON. What's that friend's name?

GASTON. You don't know him.

VIGNERON. I know well enough that I don't know him. Stand there while I have a look at you. [*He draws off a few steps, the better to survey his son.* GASTON *still has the shovel and tongs in his hands.* VIGNERON *takes them away and puts them back in their place; then he goes back toward his son and regards him tenderly*] Stand up straight! [*He goes over to him and strokes his hair*] Show me your tongue! Good! Put it out a little farther. Farther than that. That's all right. [*In a low tone*] I hope you're not tiring yourself out too much.

GASTON. Doing what, dad? I haven't been doing anything.

VIGNERON. Now you're talking nonsense. When I said "You're not tiring yourself out too much," I knew what I meant, and so did you, you scamp. Do you need any money?

GASTON. No.

VIGNERON. Open your hand.

GASTON. What's the use?

VIGNERON. [*speaking louder*]. Open your hand.

GASTON. I don't want to.

VIGNERON. Papa Vigneron brought this boy up, so he did! Here, put this money in your pocket, and be quick about it! Have a good time, kid — I want you to have the best kind of a time. Cut loose and raise the dickens. But remember — away from here you are your own boss — but here, among your sisters, mind how you act! Be careful what you say; and above all, no mushy letters! If you want to confide in anybody, I'm the one.

JUDITH. We're waiting for you to join in the second verse, dad.

VIGNERON [*looking at his watch*]. You'll have to sing the second verse without me. [*He takes his hat and goes toward the door. Then, pausing and looking around at his family, he comes back like a man who is happy where he is, and does not want to go away*] Come here a minute, old lady! [MRS. VIGNERON *comes over to him, and he puts one arm under hers*] Judith, get up! [*He does the same to* JUDITH] Come here, you other girls! If I had my own way, dearies, I'd get back into my dressing-gown and stay here until dinner time. But unfortunately my work won't do itself; and I haven't money enough yet to live without working. Perhaps I shall have some day, when I am the owner of the factory. But I must wait for two things — till my new buildings are finished, and until my children are provided for. Who could have thought that this little minx Blanche, the youngest of you, would be the first to get married? Whose turn is it next? Judith? Oh, Judith is a young lady hard to please. Unless she meets a prince, she'll die an old maid. Well, then, let some prince come along, and I'll buy him for her. As for you, you young scamp, standing over there laughing while I am talking — you can have your fling, but it won't be for long. Some fine day I'm going to take you to work with me, and you are going to start in by sweeping the factory, from top to bottom — until I make an errand boy of you. After that we'll see whether you are good for anything. Of you all, I'm the least worried about Marie. She isn't a dreamer [*looking at* JUDITH] like you; nor a sentimentalist [*looking at* BLANCHE] like you. She'll marry some good fellow, some healthy chap, a hard worker and tough as a knot, who will make you think of your father when he's not here any more. [*To his wife*] I haven't mentioned you, sweetheart, because at our age, we don't have any great longings or needs. We're happy if the kids are happy. I don't think these children of ours would have been any happier anywhere else. Well, and what next? Just let the old man put in a few more years to ensure the future of this little family, and then he'll have earned the right to take a rest. Now, then, I'm off!

THE CHILDREN. Good-by, papa. Kiss me. Good-by. [VIGNERON *escapes from them and goes out quickly*]

MRS. VIGNERON. Now, girls, get yourselves ready. [*To* BLANCHE] I want you to wait a minute; I've got

something to say to you. [*To* MARIE] Look in at the kitchen, dear, and tell Rosalie to be sure not to keep us waiting; hurry her up a little. Rosalie is very fond of us, but she's always late with dinner. Gaston, let your sister go to her room — you can take your music lesson some other time. [*There is a hustle and bustle as all the children except* BLANCHE *go out*] Now pay attention, dearie; I haven't time to talk much. I want you to make use of what I'm going to tell you; and don't interrupt me. I don't like the way you conduct yourself when your future husband is here. You look at him too much; when he gets up, you get up; you get into little corners to do your talking. I don't like those things; and to-day, when we have visitors, I should like it less than ever. If you admire George, and if you love each other, so much the better, since you are going to be married — but you are not married yet. Until you are, I want you to be more careful, and I want you to keep your feelings to yourself, as a nice girl should do. There's no sense in crying about it! It's all said and done. Now dry your eyes, give me a kiss, and go and get yourself ready. [BLANCHE *leaves her mother and is going out at the door when* AUGUSTE *enters at the rear and announces* MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS; BLANCHE *pauses*] Go and get ready!

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. How do you do, dear. Come, kiss me. It's not only the style, it's a perfect mania now, for people to kiss every five minutes. I'm here early, but don't let me disturb you. If I bother you the least bit, just say so. I'll stay or go, just as you please.

MRS. VIGNERON. Oh, stay, by all means.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Perhaps you have calls to make?

MRS. VIGNERON. Not one.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Then maybe you expect to receive some?

MRS. VIGNERON. No.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Shall I take off my hat?

MRS. VIGNERON. If you don't I'll put mine on.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. It isn't often nowadays, Mrs. Vigneron, that one finds a woman like you — a woman who can be seen any time. I wouldn't want to risk such a thing with some of my most intimate friends.

MRS. VIGNERON. Sit down and tell me how you feel.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. I'm well; quite well. I don't remember ever feeling better. I was saying this morning, at my toilet, that I had got back my color and figure.

MRS. VIGNERON. There is a question I've been wanting to ask you, ever so long. It shouldn't make any difference between us. How old are you?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Why, Mrs. Vigneron, I never try to hide my age. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't; on account of my son. He will be twenty-three years old in a few days; I was seventeen when he was born; you can figure it out.

MRS. VIGNERON. Then you don't mind my curiosity?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. It is quite natural, between two old women.

MRS. VIGNERON. You know we are two rash mothers — you, in letting your son marry so young, at twenty-three, and I, in letting my daughter marry him!

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Don't worry about that, my dear. George has obeyed me so far, and I certainly count on keeping him straight after he is married. I have brought up my son very strictly, as I think I have already told you, and there are few children like him. He has never gone into debt; and what is just as unusual, he has never frittered away his time with women. All the same, I know some women who wouldn't have asked anything better. My son has had a very thorough education; he speaks three languages, he plays, he bears a good name, has good manners and religious principles. So, with all that, he won't go far wrong, unless the world changes a good deal. [*Changing her tone*] Tell me, now that we are talking about George, and since I am looking out for his interest, does your husband know that I asked my lawyer to rectify an omission in the marriage contract?

MRS. VIGNERON. I can't say as to that.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. You remember that Mr. Vigneron, after having fixed Blanche's marriage portion at two hundred thousand francs, asked us to let him pay it in the form of an annuity.

MRS. VIGNERON. That's not so, Mrs. de Saint-Genis. From the very first my husband said that he wanted

time to settle his daughter's dowry. It was then that you spoke of some guarantee, a mortgage on the buildings under construction; and he refused to do that. Finally, the amount and the time of payment was fully agreed upon.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Very well. It seemed to me only natural and fair that until the young couple come into the whole sum, it should pay them interest of five or six per cent — say, six per cent. However, in making out the contract Mr. Vigneron showed such kind spirit toward all my little whims, that there will be no trouble between us. Let us talk about something else. Your dinner, for instance. Are you going to have many here?

MRS. VIGNERON. There are your witnesses, and ours, and my eldest daughter's music-teacher —

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Oh, you have invited him —

MRS. VIGNERON. Yes; we invited the young fellow. He is a musician, I know; but really we didn't want to make him feel his position.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Well, Mrs. Vigneron, perhaps you will think I am meddling with what doesn't concern me, but if I were in your place I'd let him come this once, and then see no more of him.

MRS. VIGNERON. Why, Mrs. de Saint-Genis? My daughter has never had reason to complain either of him or his work.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Well, never mind. Who else is there?

MRS. VIGNERON. Mr. Teissier — that's all.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. So I am going to meet this Mr. Teissier, whom I have heard so much of, but whom I have never yet seen! [*She rises and goes over to* MRS. VIGNERON, *taking her by the hand in a friendly way*] Why is it, Mrs. Vigneron, we have never seen your husband's partner?

MRS. VIGNERON. My daughters don't like him.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Surely your daughters do not lay down the law in your house? I should think Mr. Vigneron would have his partner come here regardless of childish whims.

MRS. VIGNERON. But the men see each other every day at the factory, and when they have talked over their business affairs, they have nothing more to say to each other.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Now see here, Mrs. Vigneron, I am not the kind of a woman to betray anybody's confidence; but if I guessed a secret, that would be different. Now own up — for some reason or other, it's you who have kept Mr. Teissier from coming here.

MRS. VIGNERON. I? You are entirely wrong about that. In the first place I do whatever my family wishes; besides, if I don't exactly like Mr. Teissier, at least I don't absolutely dislike him.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. You — just feel indifferent toward him?

MRS. VIGNERON. That's exactly it — indifferent.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Then I must say that you are either very short-sighted, or altogether too unselfish. Isn't Mr. Teissier extremely wealthy?

MRS. VIGNERON. Yes.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. And past sixty?

MRS. VIGNERON. Long past.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. He has no wife or children.

MRS. VIGNERON. That's right.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. It isn't known that he has a mistress?

MRS. VIGNERON. A mistress! Mr. Teissier! Good Lord, what would he be doing with a mistress?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Now listen; it's no laughing matter. Here you have, right in your grasp, a big unclaimed legacy which may come any day. It could fall to you without making talk and without underhanded means. Doesn't such a legacy mean anything to you? Either you don't care for money, or you think that it would be buying it too dearly if you showed some semblance of affection for an old man.

MRS. VIGNERON. What you say is true enough, Mrs. de Saint-Genis, and you are not the first one who has said as much. I'll explain my position. If we should be indebted to a stranger, our home wouldn't be quite the same; my husband couldn't hold up his head, and we shouldn't be as happy. But this reason doesn't apply to you. There's nothing to keep you from trying your luck with Mr. Teissier, after the children are married. If he takes an interest in this marriage, so much the better. I would be only too glad if Blanche and her husband could benefit in that way. Well, I'm drifting away from the point. If Mr. Teissier, who must be tired of

living alone at his age, should succumb to your charms, I should be quite pleased to see you married to him. Of course, there would be certain disadvantages on your side, but the compensations would be great.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. You don't know men, Mrs. Vigneron, and you're talking nonsense. In a pinch, Mr. Teissier wouldn't be too old for me; the trouble is I'm not young enough for him.

AUGUSTE [*entering*]. Mr. Merckens has just come, ma'am. Shall I show him into the other parlor?

MRS. VIGNERON. Which would you rather do, Mrs. de Saint-Genis — stay here and talk with Mr. Merckens or come and help me dress?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Just as you please.

MRS. VIGNERON. Then come with me. I'll show you some things I have bought, and you must tell me whether they are the latest style.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. With pleasure.

MRS. VIGNERON. Bring Mr. Merckens in and ask him to wait a few moments. [*They go out at the left*]

AUGUSTE. Come in and have a chair, Mr. Merckens. I'm the only one here just at the moment.

MERCKENS. All right; go ahead with your work, Auguste; don't let me disturb you. [*Going down the stage*] The servant is a good fellow, but this treatment is intolerable.

AUGUSTE [*coming back again*]. No lessons to-day, Mr. Merckens. You're here to have a good time.

MERCKENS. Is Miss Judith dressing?

AUGUSTE. Probably. But you know, with her it's one, two, three — done!

MERCKENS. Please tell Miss Judith that I'm here and have brought the music she wanted. [*At this moment* JUDITH *enters*]

AUGUSTE. Now what did I tell you! [*To* JUDITH] You weren't long dressing, miss, but you put in your time pretty well.

JUDITH. Thank you, Auguste. [AUGUSTE *takes up* VIGNERON'S *dressing-gown and goes out*]

MERCKENS. Your servant took that compliment out of my mouth; now I don't know what to say.

JUDITH. Well, it isn't worth while bothering about.

MERCKENS [*unrolling some sheets of music*]. Here is your composition, Miss Judith.

JUDITH. Let me have it.

MERCKENS. The name of the composer isn't on it, but I can have it put on.

JUDITH. You must keep it to yourself.

MERCKENS. Are you satisfied?

JUDITH. I don't know what to do. I know so well that the family, and particularly mama, wouldn't like our little conspiracy.

MERCKENS. I repeat what I told you about this little piece. It is distinctive and interesting. It's a little bit melancholy; perhaps you had a cold in the head that day. We had it printed because it was worth it; that's all there is to it.

JUDITH. Now understand, Mr. Merckens, I reserve the right to show my composition or to say nothing about it, just as I please.

MERCKENS. Why?

JUDITH. Because a girl of my age must live very quietly, without letting herself indulge in unbecoming fancies.

MERCKENS. The young ladies I know are not so particular.

JUDITH. All the more reason. [*She opens the music and reads the title tenderly*] "Farewell to the Bride and Groom." I'm not surprised that this piece is sad. I felt deeply while I was writing it. I was thinking of my little sister whom we all love so much and who is so soon to leave us. Who knows what she is giving up, and what fate awaits her!

MERCKENS. To tell the truth, wasn't there something underhanded about this marriage?

JUDITH. No. Why do you ask?

MERCKENS. Mrs. de Saint-Genis had her pick. She could have asked for the oldest rather than the youngest.

JUDITH. That would have been too bad. He and my sister make a fine couple, and that wouldn't have been the case — otherwise.

MERCKENS. Don't be impatient; your turn will come.

JUDITH. I don't let that worry me.

MERCKENS. Yet you do wish a little that you were married?

JUDITH. As late as possible. I'm getting along first-rate, and I don't care to make any change.

MERCKENS. Composing satisfies you?

JUDITH. You are right, it does.

MERCKENS. It seems too bad that such a delightful young woman, so gifted, should lack just a little something which would make her work worth while.

JUDITH. What is that something?

MERCKENS [*in a low tone*]. A little of the devil.

JUDITH. Mama wouldn't be pleased if she heard you say that; she'd think I was already running wild.

MERCKENS. Does your mother scold you sometimes?

JUDITH. Yes, sometimes. But worse than that, when she is angry she locks up my piano; and she has told father not to take us to the Opera.

MERCKENS. Where do you go, then?

JUDITH. To the Circus. I don't blame mama, though. She thinks the Opera is bad for me; and perhaps she is right. It's true; the wonders of the scenery, the allurement of the acting, and the splendid singing — why, it's a week before I am myself again.

MERCKENS. These great singers get high prices, you know.

JUDITH. They are all great to me.

MERCKENS. Perhaps you envy them?

JUDITH. I'm wild about them.

MERCKENS. Why don't you be one?

JUDITH. What! I go on the stage?

MERCKENS. Why not? You have a good contralto voice, and there are very few contraltos. You have the presence, and vivacity, and, above all, you have feeling — a great deal of it. The world will never miss one housekeeper, and it will rejoice in one more artist.

JUDITH. Hush! don't say any more about it. I am going to stick to your lessons. They seem to me better than your advice. Have you an engagement for this evening? Will you stay a little while after dinner?

MERCKENS. A little while. I still count on hearing your composition.

JUDITH. And you will play something for us, too?

MERCKENS. Don't ask that. I don't stand on ceremony with you; you and I speak right out. When I am talking I can be witty and amusing; but my music doesn't resemble my conversation the least bit.

JUDITH. We're going to dance.

MERCKENS. Nonsense!

JUDITH. Yes, we are. Blanche wanted to. The least she can do is to dance once or twice with her future husband before she is married. And then Gaston has a surprise for us. He insists he is going to dance a quadrille with his father, and that we won't be able to tell them apart.

MERCKENS. How so?

JUDITH. You'll see. You don't know how my brother can imitate papa to the very life. It's wonderful how much like him he seems at those times — his voice, his gestures, his way of joking.

MERCKENS. I can see you are going to have a good time. Thank you for asking me to be here.

JUDITH. Now you're making fun of me, Mr. Artist. I don't want to be too severe, but I fancy that many of your parties aren't worth all the fuss you make about them. Our folks would consider them ridiculous, too, to say the least. There's one thing we can say, anyway; here you will be among respectable people. [MRS. VIGNERON *and* MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS *re-enter*]

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*aside*]. I knew we'd find them together. [JUDITH *goes over to her and they greet each other affectionately*]

MRS. VIGNERON [*dressed loudly and covered with jewelry*]. Pardon me, Mr. Merckens, for making you wait. Women never do get dressed. Do you think I look well?

MERCKENS. Dazzling!

MRS. VIGNERON. Perhaps I have too much jewelry on. Mrs. de Saint-Genis advised me to take off some of it.

MERCKENS. Why, Mrs. Vigneron? Princess Limperani wore three hundred thousand francs' worth at the dinner she gave yesterday.

MRS. VIGNERON. Three hundred thousand francs! Then I can keep on what I have.

[MARIE *and* BLANCHE *enter*]

MRS. VIGNERON [*going to* JUDITH]. Your father is late. He won't be here to receive his guests.

BLANCHE [*to* MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS]. Why didn't your son come with you?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. George is working, dear. You mustn't expect me to keep him from his duties.

BLANCHE. He has more than one kind of duty now. He must love me as much as I love him.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. That's easy. He won't have to forget his other duties to do that. I warn you we are going to pull hair if you begin to spoil my boy.

MRS. VIGNERON [*to* MRS. DE SAINT-

GENIS]. I suppose George's witnesses will arrive together.

MRS DE SAINT-GENIS. No. Mr. Lenormand and my son will leave the office and come here together; the general will come alone. The general and Mr. Lenormand know each other, because they have met at our house, but I have never tried to bring about any closer relationship between them.

AUGUSTE [*announcing*]. Mr. Teissier!

TEISSIER [*entering*]. How do you do, Mrs. Vigneron.

MRS. VIGNERON. Let me take your hat, Mr. Teissier.

TEISSIER. Never mind. I'll put it somewhere myself, so as to be sure of finding it again.

MRS. VIGNERON. Just as you like. Won't you sit here, in this armchair?

TEISSIER. I will in a few minutes. It's so cold outdoors and so warm in here that I'm going to stay on my feet until I get used to the temperature of the room.

MRS. VIGNERON. I hope you are not ill?

TEISSIER. I try to keep from being ill.

MRS. VIGNERON. How do you think my husband has been lately?

TEISSIER. Very well. Vigneron takes better care of himself, now that he's got some money ahead. He's right, too. A man's life is worth more when he's got something laid by. You can attend to your guests, Mrs. Vigneron; I'll sit in the corner until dinner time. [*He leaves her*]

MRS. VIGNERON [*going over to* MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS]. Well, that's Mr. Teissier! What do you think of him?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. He has the eyes of a fox and the face of a monkey.

AUGUSTE [*announcing*]. Mr. Bourdon!

MRS. VIGNERON. I forgot to tell you that our lawyer will dine with us.

BOURDON. How do you do, ladies — young people — [*Greetings*]

MRS. VIGNERON [*presenting* BOURDON]. Mrs. de Saint-Genis; Mr. Merckens, my eldest daughter's music-teacher. You are one of the first to come, Mr. Bourdon; that's very nice of you. [BOURDON *bows*]

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Mr. Bourdon is setting a good example for his brother lawyers. They don't usually pride themselves on their punctuality.

BOURDON. Yes, we do sometimes keep people waiting — but never at dinner. [*Going over to* MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS] I have been asked to congratulate you, Mrs. de Saint-Genis.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Mr. Testelin?

BOURDON. Yes. We were talking about your son's marriage to Miss Vigneron, and I happened to say that I was going to have dinner with you. "There will be a delightful woman there," he said. "Give her my best regards."

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Mr. Testelin has been my lawyer for twenty years.

BOURDON. So he said. [*In a lower tone, coming nearer to her*] Testelin is a courteous fellow, with considerable weakness for pretty women.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*dryly*]. It's the first time I ever heard that. [*She leaves him, smiling*]

BOURDON [*to* MRS. VIGNERON]. Is Teissier dining here?

MRS. VIGNERON [*pointing out* TEISSIER *to him*]. There he is, if you want to talk to him.

BOURDON. How are you, Teissier?

TEISSIER. Oh, it's you, Bourdon! Come here a minute; I want to tell you something. [*In a low tone*] I was at the Lawyer's Club to-day on business. I was speaking to the President about my long acquaintance with you, and he got rather confidential about you. "I know Bourdon," he said. "He's got brains enough; he's as shrewd as they make them; but sometimes he overplays his hand. We've got to squelch him."

BOURDON. What do I care for the Lawyer's Club? They're a crowd of stiff-necks who want to give the Club a goody-goody tone. The Club is meant to be a protection for us — not for the public.

TEISSIER. Now listen, Bourdon; I haven't repeated this conversation to keep you from doing business. I just thought I would be doing you a favor by letting you know.

BOURDON. So I take it, friend Teissier. I'm much obliged.

AUGUSTE [*announcing*]. Mr. Lenormand and Mr. George de Saint-Genis!

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*to* MRS. VIGNERON]. I want you to meet Mr. Lenormand. [*This presentation and those following take place at the rear.* GEORGE *alone goes to the front of the stage*]

BLANCHE [*speaking in a low tone to*

GEORGE]. Don't say anything to me, and don't come too near me. Mama has given me a dressing down. I was terribly afraid; I didn't know just what she was going to say.

AUGUSTE [*announcing*]. General Fromentin!

BOURDON [*to* MERCKENS]. You are a pianist?

MERCKENS. A composer.

BOURDON. A musician — that's what I should have said. Do you like to go into society?

MERCKENS. I can't help myself; I'm dragged into it.

BOURDON. You might remember my name and address, "Mr. Bourdon, lawyer, 22 St. Anne street." We have a few friends with us every Sunday evening. I ought to warn you there's nothing fancy about it. The people come at nine o'clock, we have a little music, sing a few songs, have a cup of tea, and by midnight everybody is in bed.

MERCKENS. I couldn't promise to come every Sunday.

BOURDON. Come when you can; we'll be glad to see you any time.

AUGUSTE [*announcing*]. Mr. Vigneron!

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*to* MRS. VIGNERON]. What! Is your husband in the habit of announcing his arrival?

MRS. VIGNERON. The servant has made a mistake, of course. [GASTON *enters, with his father's dressing-gown on. He imitates his father's voice and walk*]

GASTON [*approaching* MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS]. How is the lovely Mrs. de Saint-Genis?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*taking the joke in good part*]. I'm very well, thank you, Mr. Vigneron.

GASTON. Mr. Bourdon, I am your humble servant. [*To* MERCKENS]. How do you do, young man. [*To* LENORMAND *and the* GENERAL] Delighted to meet you, gentlemen.

MRS. VIGNERON. That's what we get for spoiling children! This young rascal is caricaturing his father.

GASTON [*to* MRS. VIGNERON]. Well, old lady, is dinner ready? By heavens, we haven't spared any expense to give you a good time; we don't have a marriage in the family every day. [*To his sisters*] Which one of you is it? I don't remember. It strikes me that while we are waiting for dinner Miss Judith ought to play us something — *La Dame Blanche*, for instance.

MRS. VIGNERON. Come, Gaston, that's enough. Take off that dressing-gown and act properly.

GASTON. Yes, old lady. [*The sisters help him off with the gown, amid general laughter*]

AUGUSTE [*approaching* MRS. VIGNERON]. There's a gentleman here who wasn't invited to dinner and wants to speak with you.

MRS. VIGNERON. What gentleman, Auguste? Is this some new joke of my son's?

AUGUSTE. If you order me to admit him you will see whether it is or not.

MRS. VIGNERON. Don't admit anyone. Tell the gentleman I can't see him.

AUGUSTE. If he insists, ma'am?

MRS. VIGNERON. Then send him about his business.

AUGUSTE [*returning*]. Here he is, ma'am.

THE DOCTOR [*coming forward*]. Mrs. Vigneron?

MRS. VIGNERON. Yes, sir.

THE DOCTOR [*coming close to her and speaking in a very low voice*] Have you children here, Mrs. Vigneron?

MRS. VIGNERON. Yes, sir.

THE DOCTOR. Send them out of the room. Please do it at once.

MRS. VIGNERON [*disturbed, and speaking quickly*]. Go into the other parlor, girls. Run along, now; do as I tell you; go into the other parlor. Gaston, you go along with your sisters. Mrs. de Saint-Genis, will you please take the girls in? [*She opens the door at the right, and the children pass out*]

THE DOCTOR [*speaking to the men, who have risen*]. You can stay, gentlemen. Are you relatives of Mr. Vigneron?

BOURDON. No, just his friends.

THE DOCTOR. Well, gentlemen, your friend has just had a stroke of apoplexy.

[VIGNERON *is brought in at the rear.* MRS. VIGNERON *cries out and throws herself upon her husband's body*]

ACT II

The scene is the same as in the preceding act.

MRS. VIGNERON [*weeping, with handkerchief in hand*]. Do forgive me, Mrs. de Saint-Genis; I'm ashamed to weep like this before you, but I can't help it. To think that only one month ago he

was sitting there right where you are now, and that I shall never see him again! You knew him; he was so good, so happy; he was too happy, and so were we all; it couldn't last. Do talk to me; it will give me a chance to control myself. I know I ought to make the best of it. He had to die sometime. But many a time I used to ask God to let me be the first to go. Don't you think men as good as my husband go to heaven?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. There's no doubt about it, Mrs. Vigneron.

MRS. VIGNERON. Tell me about your son. I have scarcely laid eyes on him since our misfortune. He's good, too; Blanche told me he wept.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. George is well, thank you.

MRS. VIGNERON. What a setback it is for the poor dears! And they love each other so much!

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. This marriage is exactly what I should have talked of if I had found you composed. You are not sensible or courageous, my dear. I know what it is to lose a husband. I've been all through it. Only I had more reason to complain than you. When Mr. de Saint-Genis died he left me nothing but debts and a four-year-old child on my hands. Your daughters are old enough to be a consolation to you; they are grown up; and you don't have to worry about their future or your own. [*Changing her tone*] I suppose now, in the condition you are in, you haven't given thought to your business affairs?

MRS. VIGNERON. What business affairs?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. You ought to know that Mr. Vigneron's estate won't settle itself. You will have to have the apportionment settled, and perhaps there will be some difficulties to meet.

MRS. VIGNERON. Oh, no, Mrs. de Saint-Genis, no difficulties. My husband was too honest a man ever to have business difficulties.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. They could arise after his death. Now listen to me. It isn't Mr. Vigneron's uprightness I'm questioning; it's that of the other people. Have you seen Mr. Teissier yet?

MRS. VIGNERON. Mr. Teissier has stayed at home as usual. I needed money, and he sent it to me after a little urging; that is the extent of our dealings.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Now listen to what I tell you, Mrs. Vigneron. Even if my advice should be wrong in this case, adopt it as a general rule: Keep an eye on Mr. Teissier.

MRS. VIGNERON. All right, I will keep an eye on him. But just suppose he should have bad intentions: it's my lawyer, not I, who should bring him to terms.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Keep an eye on your lawyer.

MRS. VIGNERON. Oh, Mrs. de Saint-Genis!

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. There's no use saying "Oh!" I know these lawyers, Mrs. Vigneron. You never know whether they are going to save you or be the undoing of you; and according to their ideas you are always in the wrong.

MRS. VIGNERON. What would you say if I should tell you that my lawyer, Mr. Bourdon, is also Mr. Teissier's lawyer?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. I would advise you to get another.

MRS. VIGNERON. No; I have a blind confidence in Mr. Bourdon, and I sha'n't get rid of him till I lose it.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. It will be too late then.

AUGUSTE [*entering and speaking to* MRS. VIGNERON]. Mr. Lefort sends his regards and wants to know if you have looked over his memorandum.

MRS. VIGNERON. His memorandum! Did he give me one?

AUGUSTE. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. VIGNERON. Where did I put it? I don't know anything about it.

AUGUSTE. Mr. Lefort will call sometime during the day.

MRS. VIGNERON. Very well, tell him I will see him. [AUGUSTE *goes out*] Mr. Lefort is our architect.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Keep an eye on your architect!

MRS. VIGNERON. I don't know where you got such a bad opinion of other people, Mrs. de Saint-Genis; but if I were you, I shouldn't display it.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. It's the least I can do to put you on your guard. Everybody looks honest to you.

MRS. VIGNERON. And nobody looks honest to you.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*rising*]. I don't wish you any harm, Mrs. Vigne-

ron, and I hope with all my heart, for your sake and the sake of your daughters, who are really delightful girls, that everything goes smoothly in settling Mr. Vigneron's estate. But in business nothing goes smoothly. What seems simple is complicated, and what seems complicated is beyond understanding. Take my word for it, you will be wise to stop thinking a little while of him who is gone, in order to think of yourself and your children instead. Unfortunately I don't know whether Mr. Vigneron left you an annuity or government bonds. He didn't, did he? I dare say his fortune was in that factory, owned by him and Mr. Teissier together? He had land, true enough; but he had bought most of it with borrowed money and on mortgage. I tell you all this with the best of feeling. Women ought to warn and help each other. As for self-interest, it looks as though I no longer had any. We had a very nice plan, to marry our children. I must say it is not merely postponed, but really in danger. It doesn't seem possible for you to fulfill the financial obligations you undertook, and I wouldn't let my son make a poor marriage for anything — and have him blame me for it afterwards.

MRS. VIGNERON. Just as you please, Mrs. de Saint-Genis. [*A pause and embarrassed silence*]

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*speaking quickly*]. Good-by, Mrs. Vigneron. Do as I tell you; look out for your interests, and we can talk about our children some other time. But for heaven's sake, Mrs. Vigneron, get this into your head — it is the most useful and the friendliest advice I can give you: Keep an eye on everybody — *everybody!* [*She goes toward the door at the rear,* MRS. VIGNERON *coldly escorting her. The door opens and* TEISSIER *enters*] Stay here; you needn't go to the door with me. [*She goes out*]

MRS. VIGNERON [*weeping, handkerchief in hand*]. What a terrible thing this is, Mr. Teissier! My poor husband! It was work that killed him! Why did he work so hard? He didn't care for money; he spent nothing on himself. Oh, he wanted to see his children happy while he was living, and to leave them rich! [*A silence*]

TEISSIER. Mrs. Vigneron, did you authorize Mrs. de Saint-Genis to come to my house to find out how things stand in regard to your husband's estate?

MRS. VIGNERON. I know nothing about it, and I should not have sanctioned it.

TEISSIER. I did my duty on the double-quick. I took the lady by the arm and showed her the door.

MRS. VIGNERON. That's all she deserved. Mrs. de Saint-Genis was here when you came, Mr. Teissier, and was talking about my husband's affairs. You know all about them and understand them better than anybody else. Won't you enlighten me?

TEISSIER. When I have a few minutes of leisure, I'll take pleasure in drawing up a statement of your husband's estate. What do you want most to know? Whether it will be settled at a loss or profit? [MRS. VIGNERON *waves her hand deprecatingly*] From offhand calculations I have made, the situation in general looks something like this — now pay attention: when the factory is sold —

MRS. VIGNERON. Why sell it?

TEISSIER. We shall have to. When your real estate and the unfinished buildings, also, are sold —

MRS. VIGNERON. I'm going to keep my real estate.

TEISSIER. You can't. When your current debts are liquidated —

MRS. VIGNERON. But I have no debts.

TEISSIER. I figure them at about forty thousand francs. In that sum I haven't included your architect, who will have to be paid after your real estate is sold. Let me go on. After the registry tax is paid —

MRS. VIGNERON. What! Does a person have to pay for inheriting money?

TEISSIER. Certainly you have to pay, Mrs. Vigneron. Now, when the usual expenses have been met — I include under the head of "usual expenses" such things as the lawyers' fees, and those of his associates, unforeseen bills, carriage hire, postage, etc. In a word, when you have closed the account which you must open under the head of "Settlement of the estate of the late Mr. Vigneron, my husband", there will be left about fifty thousand francs.

MRS. VIGNERON. Fifty thousand francs a year income.

TEISSIER. What, income? Don't you hear what I'm telling you? How

do you see in what Vigneron left the capital necessary to provide an income of fifty thousand francs?

MRS. VIGNERON [*leaves him abruptly, and, having rung, opens the writing-desk in a hurry and writes*]. "My dear Mr. Bourdon. Please come and see me as soon as you can. I shall not rest easy till I have seen you. Mrs. Vigneron." Fifty thousand francs! [*To* AUGUSTE, *who has just come in*] Deliver this letter at once.

TEISSIER [*having taken out a pocket-book cram full of papers*]. Now if you will pay better attention while I am reading —

MRS. VIGNERON. Fifty thousand francs! [*Turning to* TEISSIER *and making him stuff the papers back into his pocketbook*] Keep your papers, Mr. Teissier; I want nothing more to do with you. [*She goes out at the left hurriedly*]

TEISSIER [*stuffing the papers back*]. Ignorance, incompetence, impulsiveness — that's a woman, all over. What's she thinking of, I'd like to know? She wants to keep her lands. Well, she can't. Bourdon will have to make her understand that. If Bourdon can handle this case as he promised me he could — quickly and quietly — I can get my hands on real estate worth twice what it will cost me. But we can't lose a minute's time. Delay will bring around a crowd of prospective buyers, and that puts prices up. When Bourdon finds out that I have struck the first blow, he'll do the rest in a hurry. [*He is going out when* MARIE *enters at the left*]

MARIE. Don't go away, Mr. Teissier, before making up with my mother. She has cried so much, poor thing, that she doesn't know which end her head is on.

TEISSIER [*coming back*]. You stopped me just in time, young woman. I was going to have your mother summoned into court, in order to recover the money I have advanced to her. For my part, I'd rather not leave your mother in this mess. [*He takes out his pocketbook again and selects a different paper from it*] Please give your mother this little bill. She can verify it easily enough: "On the seventh of January, advanced to Mrs. Vigneron 4,000 francs to pay the expenses of your father's funeral; on the fifteenth of January, advanced to Mrs. Vigneron 5,000 francs for household expenses" (at least, that's what she said it was for); "on the same day" — the fifteenth, understand? — "paid out, in taking up a bill of exchange signed by your brother and drawn to the order of a money-lender named Lefébure, 10,000 francs." Your brother being under age, his signature was worthless. But your mother, knowing that your brother deceived the man about his age and personal resources, didn't want the money-lender to be cheated. [*He folds up the paper and puts it back in the pocketbook*] Now, what can I do for you?

MARIE. Please stay awhile, Mr. Teissier. It wasn't this bill that upset my mother and made her lose her temper with you. On the contrary, she would have thanked you for honoring my brother's signature. She put the blame on him, where it belongs.

TEISSIER [*surprised, and smiling*]. Then you know what a signature is?

MARIE. My father told me.

TEISSIER. He would have done better by telling your brother.

MARIE. Sit down, Mr. Teissier. Perhaps I am rather young to talk business with you.

TEISSIER [*remaining standing, smiling all the while*]. Go ahead, talk; I'm listening.

MARIE. Speaking for myself, I am looking for a great change in our social condition, but I don't think that we shall lose everything. In any case, Mr. Teissier, you would not advise us to be either too yielding or too rash, would you? Then what are we to do? Why, we must find out just where we stand, ask for advice, and not take a single step without knowing the why and wherefore of our condition.

TEISSIER. Ah! — Leaving aside the real estate, which doesn't concern me, what would you do with the factory, while you are waiting?

MARIE. What will happen, Mr. Teissier, if we want to keep it, and you want to sell it?

TEISSIER. It will be sold. The law provides for such a case.

MARIE. There is a law about it?

TEISSIER [*smiling all the while*]. Yes, miss, there is a law on the subject. Article 815 of the Statutes authorizes either one of two partners to dissolve a partnership that has been broken by the death of one of them. I can prove it to you on the spot. [*Taking a book*

from his pocket] You see the title of this book: "Collected Laws and Regulations in Force throughout French Territory." I always carry a copy with me. I advise you to do the same. [*He passes her the book with a certain page indicated. While she is reading he watches her with a look in which are mingled interest, pleasure and mockery*] Do you understand it?

MARIE. Perfectly. [*A pause*]

TEISSIER. Your name is Marie, and you are the second daughter?

MARIE. Yes, Mr. Teissier. Why?

TEISSIER. Your father had a marked preference for you.

MARIE. My father loved all his children alike.

TEISSIER. Nevertheless he considered you cleverer than your sisters.

MARIE. He used to say so sometimes, to console me for not being as good-looking as they are.

TEISSIER. What's the matter with you? You have pretty eyes, rosy cheeks, a well-rounded figure, everything that goes to indicate a healthy woman.

MARIE. I am not worried about my appearance. All I ask is not to be noticed.

TEISSIER. Of course, you are the one that helps your mother run the house. In a pinch you would make a good private secretary.

MARIE. There has never been any necessity for it so far.

TEISSIER. Now is the time. I don't believe your mother is capable of disentangling herself alone. You will be a great help to her. Have you any taste for business?

MARIE. I understand as much of it as I have to.

TEISSIER. You're not afraid to take care of correspondence?

MARIE. No; I know what has to be said.

TEISSIER. Are you good at figures? Come, yes or no? You don't want to tell? [*Leaving her*] She ought to be a wonder at figures.

MARIE. Mr. Teissier, what do you think our real estate is worth?

TEISSIER. Your lawyer can tell you that better than I can. [*Going back toward her, after taking up his hat*] I must get back to business now, miss. I know what you are thinking of; that the factory is a fine property, and you can keep a hold on it. Who is going to assure me that it won't fall down some night? Who is going to convince me that you yourselves, by some slick trick, might not sell it so that you could buy it up at half price?

MARIE. Why should you anticipate that, Mr. Teissier?

TEISSIER. I anticipate only what I would do myself, if I were forty years old instead of sixty odd. To sum up, your need of money on the one hand, and on the other hand my knowledge of where my best interests lie, are going to end in the sale of the factory. Its condition is very prosperous. The death of its manager is a good excuse, and one that doesn't often happen along, to sell out at a profit. Have you got anything else to say to me?

MARIE. Don't go away, Mr. Teissier, without seeing my mother again. She is calmer now, and will listen to you very willingly.

TEISSIER. It's no use. I told your mother what I had to say. You are intelligent enough to explain the rest to her.

MARIE [*having rung*]. Do what I ask, Mr. Teissier. My mother could not help losing her temper; by going in to see her, you will give her a chance to apologize.

TEISSIER. Well, just as you say. So you want us to be on good terms? I'll tell you right now, you can't gain anything by it. How old are you, Miss Marie? Scarcely turned twenty! And already a modest, sensible little woman, who is able to express herself very clearly. [*Leaving her*] And what her father did not tell me, a very tempting creature. [AUGUSTE *enters*]

MARIE. Go with Auguste, please; he will take you in to my mother.

TEISSIER. My best wishes for you, miss. [*He goes out at the left, at a signal from* AUGUSTE *to follow him*]

MARIE [*bursting into tears*]. Oh, father, father!

BLANCHE [*entering and going slowly over to her sister*]. What's the matter, dear?

MARIE. Mr. Teissier.

BLANCHE. Is it that scoundrel you've been with such a long while?

MARIE. Hush, dear, hush. We must be careful now and not talk indiscreetly.

BLANCHE. Why?

MARIE. Why? I don't want to tell you; but whether you know to-day or to-morrow, it will be just as hard for you.

BLANCHE. What do you mean by that?

MARIE. We may be ruined.

BLANCHE. Ruined! [MARIE *lowers her head.* BLANCHE *bursts into tears, and the two girls put their arms around each other. Then they separate, but* BLANCHE *continues to weep, and is greatly affected*]

MARIE. I shouldn't have told you about a misfortune that may not happen. Here is the whole truth: I don't yet see very clearly into our situation, but it doesn't look promising. Nevertheless, it may all come out right, on one condition: that we are reasonable, prudent, careful in our dealings with everybody, and make up our minds from this moment to overlook many distasteful things.

BLANCHE. You can do as you please, mama, Judith and you; but I shall have nothing to do with it. I should like to sleep until after I am married.

MARIE. Until after your marriage, dear!

BLANCHE. Now what have you on your mind?

MARIE. I'm sorry to think that this marriage, which means so much to you, may not take place, after all.

BLANCHE. You are wrong, if you think Mr. de Saint-Genis thinks more about a dowry than he does about a loving heart.

MARIE. Men want both when they marry. But even if Mr. de Saint-Genis were the most disinterested man in the world, he has a mother who will do the calculating for him.

BLANCHE. His mother is his mother. If she has faults, I don't want to see them. But she has been married, and she would not want her son to be disloyal to another woman.

MARIE. Let's not be unreasonable and unjust in our misfortune, dear. Both families have promised certain things; if we cannot keep ours, Mr. de Saint-Genis will be released from his.

BLANCHE. You are wrong, you are wrong, I am sure of it. If I should say the word to-morrow, or a year from now, or ten years from now, George would marry me, just as he ought to do, if I wished it. You see, dear, my marriage is not like so many others, which can take place or not, without doing harm. You don't know how you are hurting me by having the least doubt about its taking place. [*Pause*] Tell me something about how we are ruined.

MARIE. Later on; I don't know myself, yet.

BLANCHE. Who told you about it?

MARIE. Mr. Teissier. I must tell you again to be careful. Mr. Teissier is in the other room with mama. I have just made it up between them.

BLANCHE. Were they angry with each other?

MARIE. Yes, they were. Mama lost her temper and told him to get out.

BLANCHE. She did right.

MARIE. She did wrong; and she knew it right away. Our situation is bad enough without making it worse by hasty and thoughtless actions. Bear in mind, Blanche, the very existence of all of us, you as well as the rest of us, is at stake. No matter how sure you may feel of Mr. de Saint-Genis, a man looks twice before marrying a woman who hasn't a cent. You are the sweetest little woman in the world; you are all heart and feelings; for you money doesn't exist; but you will find it exists for other people. You will find that out wherever you go. In business, for instance; and we are engaged in business with Mr. Teissier. In marriages, too, as perhaps you are going to learn to your cost. Money certainly has its price. Otherwise there would not be so many misfortunes coming from the lack of it, or so many vile deeds committed because of it.

BLANCHE [*aside*]. Is it possible that a young man like him, loving and beloved as he is, would stoop to such a base act rather than sacrifice his money interests?

MARIE. You know what I would like, don't you, dear? You know I want this marriage to take place, because you see happiness in it. But if I were in your place, I should be prepared for anything. I should be in raptures if it took place; and if it didn't I should be resigned.

BLANCHE. Resigned! If I thought that Mr. de Saint-Genis had sought me out for my money, I shouldn't be able to hold up my head again. And if he refused to marry me because I had lost my money, I should either go crazy or I should die.

MARIE. Then you do love him a great deal?

BLANCHE. Yes, I do. If you want to know, I worship him! He is kind and loving, and childlike, just as I am. I am positive he has a big heart and

couldn't bring himself to do a wrong thing. You can see, can't you, how much I want to marry him? But even if I should be deceived in him; if I should find out that he was not worthy of either love or respect; if he should prove to be the vilest creature in the world, I should still have to marry him —

MARIE [*aside*]. The poor girl is suffering so much she doesn't know what she is saying.

BLANCHE [*aside*]. Oh, what have we done that is wrong? — You know me, sister dear. We have lived together for twenty years without any secrets from each other. Haven't I been a good girl? I have been very affectionate, I know; but haven't I been good, too? I have never had a single thought that I couldn't tell. If I had met Mr. de Saint-Genis in the street, I shouldn't have even looked at him. But he came here arm in arm with my father. We liked each other immediately, and so we were engaged. Mama told me to keep an eye on the future, but I couldn't see any great harm or wrong in trusting him.

MARIE. Come, don't go on that way; you are exaggerating, as you always do. You told Mr. de Saint-Genis that you loved him, I suppose? Well, you are going to marry him, so that's excusable. You held hands sometimes? Perhaps you let him kiss you? You shouldn't have done that; but it doesn't call for all the reproaches you are heaping on yourself.

BLANCHE [*after a little hesitation*]. I am his wife, do you hear? I am his wife!

MARIE [*very innocently*]. I don't see what you mean.

BLANCHE [*at first overcome with amazement*]. Oh, forgive me, dearie. You are as pure as an angel. I shouldn't have spoken to you that way. Forget what I have just said; don't try to understand it; and please don't say anything about it to mama or Judith.

MARIE. Either you are slightly out of your head or I am rather stupid.

BLANCHE. Yes, that's it; I am out of my head. And you are the dearest and sweetest sister anyone ever had. [*She kisses her passionately*]

BOURDON [*entering*]. How do you do! Your mother is in, isn't she? Will you please tell her that I am here?

MARIE. You go, dear. [BLANCHE *goes out at the left*]

BOURDON. Your mother just wrote me that she was very eager to see me; and I can readily believe it. I have been at my office every day, waiting for her to call me.

MARIE. My mother has been so afflicted, Mr. Bourdon, and has suffered so much —

BOURDON. I understand perfectly, my dear young lady, that a woman who has had such a blow as your mother can't enjoy paying visits or going shopping. But it is no more than proper to see your lawyer, or at least to ask him to drop in. Fortunately, your father's estate does not offer very great difficulties. Nevertheless, your father left considerable real estate which ought to be inspected at once and turned into cash as soon as possible. Understand me, as soon as possible.

MARIE. Here's mother.

MRS. VIGNERON [*weeping, handkerchief in hand*]. What a terrible blow, Mr. Bourdon! What a dreadful thing! My poor husband! I don't seem to be able to weep enough. I just know I shall never live through it. [*A silence*]

BOURDON. Tell me, Mrs. Vigneron, while I happen to think of it: did you give Mrs. de Saint-Genis permission to call on me to learn how things stand in regard to your husband's estate?

MRS. VIGNERON. She had no permission from me. And so Mrs. de Saint-Genis paid you a visit, too —!

BOURDON. Don't worry about that. The way I treated her she won't want to come again. You wanted to see me, Mrs. Vigneron. Please speak quickly and clearly, and make it brief.

MRS. VIGNERON. I won't detain you long, Mr. Bourdon. I have only one question to ask you. Is it true — is it possible that my husband left all told only fifty thousand francs?

BOURDON. Who told you that?

MRS. VIGNERON. Mr. Teissier.

BOURDON. Fifty thousand francs! Teissier was too quick about it. You know him; he isn't a bad man, but he is brutal when it comes to a matter of money. I hope you will get more than that out of it, Mrs. Vigneron, and I will do all I can, you may be sure. [MRS. VIGNERON *bursts into tears and sinks upon the couch;* BOURDON *goes over to her*] So, you were hoping that Mr. Vigneron's estate would amount to a great deal? What was your estimate?

MRS. VIGNERON. I don't know, Mr. Bourdon.

BOURDON. But you should have figured up what your husband left. When a woman loses her husband, that's the first thing she should think of. [*He walks away*] However, it was none the less wrong on Teissier's part — and I'll tell him so, too — to name an amount at random. Business isn't conducted that way. In a settlement, the way to begin is at the beginning, taking up the most urgent matters; then advancing step by step until the end is reached — and then you have what you have. [*Returning to* MRS. VIGNERON] Have you made any decision, Mrs. Vigneron, about your real estate? There your necessity is manifest; it must be sold.

MARIE. How much do you think it would bring us?

BOURDON [*going over to* MARIE]. How much? Nothing. You can't count on anything.

MRS. VIGNERON [*rising*]. Then what is the advantage in getting rid of it?

BOURDON [*returning to* MRS. VIGNERON]. What advantage, Mrs. Vigneron? By doing so you remove the shackles from your feet. Believe me, I am not usually so downright in my advice as I am at this moment. Each day's delay is filled with grave consequences for you. While you are deliberating, Catiline is at the gates of Rome; Catiline being, in this case, the mortgages that are eating you up, your architect with his bill, and the civil authorities, with their taxes and fees.

[TEISSIER *re-enters at the left;* BLANCHE *comes in behind him*]

TEISSIER. How are you, Bourdon?

BOURDON. How do you do, Teissier. I was just explaining to Mrs. Vigneron and her daughter the impossibility of their holding on to their real estate.

TEISSIER. I have nothing to say as to that. The ladies couldn't find a better adviser than you. They are in good hands.

BOURDON. Mrs. Vigneron, please look at the thing from my point of view, so that we won't misunderstand each other. I don't want to be reproached later on for what wasn't my fault. I restrict myself to this principle: the *statu quo* being deadly against you, you must get rid of the *statu quo*. I can't say that your real estate is well situated, or that this is the best time to put it up at auction. Far from it. But, by having the sale at the most favorable time — and I'll look out for that — and getting rid of certain obstacles, together with some smooth work and clever advertising, we may get something good out of it.

TEISSIER [*aside*]. What's that? What's that? [*In a low tone to* BOURDON] Then we're not working together in this?

BOURDON [*in a low tone to* TEISSIER]. Let me go ahead. [*Going over to* MRS. VIGNERON] Now, then, Mrs. Vigneron, think it over; but think it over quickly, I urge you. When you have made up your mind, please let me know. [*He makes a move as if to go*]

TEISSIER. Don't go, Bourdon, without saying something about the factory.

BOURDON. The factory can wait, friend Teissier. I want to help Mrs. Vigneron get rid of her real estate before we do anything else. We see here a widow and four children who are growing poorer every day. That's a mighty important state of things; we mustn't forget that. [TEISSIER *smiles*]

AUGUSTE [*entering, and in a low voice to* MRS. VIGNERON]. Mr. Lefort is here, ma'am.

MRS. VIGNERON. Please wait for a minute, Mr. Bourdon. After hearing what our architect has to say you may change your mind.

BOURDON. Just as you say, madam.

MRS. VIGNERON [*to* AUGUSTE]. Bring Mr. Lefort in, and ask Judith to come here. [LEFORT *enters*]

MRS. VIGNERON [*weeping, her handkerchief in her hand*]. What a terrible blow, Mr. Lefort! What a dreadful thing! My poor husband! I shall never get over his loss.

LEFORT [*has vulgar manners and a powerful voice*]. Come, madam, don't cry like that. With a little nerve and perseverance you can fill your husband's boots. [*He goes up stage*]

TEISSIER. Hello, Lefort!

LEFORT. Glad to see you, Teissier.

[JUDITH *enters*]

MARIE [*to* LEFORT]. Were you very much interested, Mr. Lefort, in the buildings entrusted to you?

LEFORT. Yes, miss. Vigneron was more like a brother than a client.

MARIE. We are on the eve of making an important decision —

LEFORT. Ask me anything you want to. My time is yours, my money is at

your service. Vigneron's children are my children.

MARIE. If you had some explanations, or even some project, to let us hear, please tell us in the presence of these gentlemen.

LEFORT. I am ready, miss. These gentlemen don't scare me. It's a way of mine to stand right up to everybody.

MRS. VIGNERON. Sit there, Mr. Lefort.

LEFORT [*seated*]. Have you looked at my memorandum, madam? No? That's bad. It contained a little account of Mr. Vigneron's real estate, showing the whole business from A to Z. If I had that account right here before me, I could be briefer and make you understand better.

MARIE. I can give it to you, Mr. Lefort. I put it away myself.

LEFORT. If you please. [MARIE *goes to the writing-desk, passing in front of her mother and* TEISSIER, *who are seated side by side*]

TEISSIER [*to* MRS. VIGNERON]. Is your daughter methodical?

MRS. VIGNERON. Very.

TEISSIER. She's likely to grow up to be a clever woman, isn't she?

MRS. VIGNERON. Yes, I think so.

TEISSIER. Is she good at figures? [*No reply*]

BOURDON [*having taken the memorandum from* MARIE, *detaches part of it and hands it to* LEFORT]. That's what you want, undoubtedly. If you don't mind, I'll run over your memorandum while I am listening to you. [*The two men exchange hostile glances*]

LEFORT [*stressing each phrase*]. In the first place, Mr. Vigneron's real estate, situated on the outskirts of Paris near a railway station, and on that account under a thousand disadvantages, was, at the price he paid for it, a sorry bargain. To speak plainly, he was a sucker.

BOURDON. Stop! Nobody had any reason to deceive Mr. Vigneron. He bought this land hoping it would be taken by eminent domain.

LEFORT. By whom?

BOURDON. By the railroad.

LEFORT. Great joke, that is! It was the railroad that sold it to him.

BOURDON. Are you sure of that?

LEFORT. Absolutely sure.

BOURDON. Well, even so. Then he must have supposed that the city, which had undertaken some big work in the neighborhood, would need that land. I remember, now; he expected to do business with the city.

LEFORT. Huh! With the city or with the Turks! You can't tell me anything about real estate. I know the lay of Paris land from A to Z. Well, I'll go on. Mr. Vigneron having been caught for a sucker — I say it again — very quickly realized his foolishness and wanted to dodge the consequences. How could he do it? By building on the land. Then he sent for me. He knew of old that I was square and straightforward, and before I left him he had given me the work of making plans. Unfortunately I had scarcely begun the work, and the foundations had hardly been laid [*he accompanies his words with a comical pantomime*] when Vigneron moved on to the next world.

BOURDON. We know all these details, my dear fellow. You are wasting our time in telling them over again.

LEFORT. The heirs are in a bad fix; but they can get out of it and make something, too. They can command the services of a man who is faithful, intelligent and highly esteemed throughout the building profession in Paris. That man is the architect who served the deceased. He is now their architect. Will they listen to him? If they ignore his advice and management [*another comical pantomime*] their goose is cooked.

BOURDON. Now, sir, cutting out phraseology, what's your plan?

LEFORT. Let's reason it out from the least favorable hypothesis. Leave Lefort out of it. He put in an honest bill, without quibbling over each item. He asked for nothing more for himself. Now what's going to become of the real estate? I repeat that it is situated far from the centre of the city, and I add that it suffers from numerous other defects. It is encumbered with mortgages. These are just so many points which some unknown purchaser could turn against the owners. [*Volubly*] It would be like this: somebody would depreciate the property, precipitate a public sale, get rid of any honest prospective buyers, fool the courts into granting a judgment at some miserably small sum, pack the auction [*more pantomime*] and there you have a property reduced to nothing.

BOURDON. I demand, sir, that you be more precise. You say somebody

would do this, that and the other. Who would do it, pray? Do you know that only one person could do it, and that you are slandering the lawyer who has charge of the settlement of the estate?

LEFORT. That's you, ain't it?

BOURDON. I am not speaking for myself, sir, but for all my brother lawyers, whom you are libelling. You are attacking, offhand, the most respectable body of men I know of. You are bringing under suspicion the Law itself, in the persons of the officers sworn to execute it. Sir, you are doing worse, if it be possible. You are disturbing the security of families. Really, now, it's rather stiff to make an accusation like this, and then bring in a bill of thirty-seven thousand francs!

LEFORT. I should like to be present when you present *your* bill.

BOURDON. Enough, sir! Now, briefly, what do you propose?

LEFORT. I'm coming to my proposal. I propose that the Vigneron heirs carry out the building —

BOURDON. Well, now, that's what I thought you were getting at. You are the architect, and you propose to continue the building operations.

LEFORT. Let me go on, sir.

BOURDON. It isn't worth while. If Mrs. Vigneron wants to listen to you, she may; but I can't bear such rambling talk any longer. How much money can you sink in it? Mrs. Vigneron has no money; of that I warn you. Where is yours? In three months we should be back at the same point, with this difference — that your bill, now thirty-seven thousand francs, would be doubled, at the rate you are going. Don't force me to say any more. I take your offers in the spirit they are made. I don't want to witness any such shady transaction, which would hand the ownership over to you for a song.

LEFORT. Do you know what you are saying, sir? Look me in the eye. Do I look like a man who would indulge in shady transactions? Upon my soul, I never saw such a clown as you in my life.

BOURDON [*restraining himself, and speaking just above a whisper*]. What did you call me, you humbug! [MRS. VIGNERON *rises to intervene*]

TEISSIER. Let 'em go on, madam; don't say anything. Never interrupt a business conversation.

LEFORT [*to* MRS. VIGNERON]. I give in, madam. If you want to know my plan and the resources at my disposal, you can call me again. In the other event, you will please settle my bill as soon as possible. I have to advance money to my clients; while lawyers juggle with their clients' money. [*He goes out*]

TEISSIER. Wait for me, Lefort. We'll go up street together. [*To* MRS. VIGNERON] I leave you in Bourdon's hands, Mrs. Vigneron. Profit by his advice.

LEFORT [*returning*]. I forgot to say, madam — was it with your permission that Mrs. de Saint-Genis came to my place —?

MRS. VIGNERON. She has been everywhere! I gave nobody permission to go to see you, Mr. Lefort; nobody. And if she comes again —

LEFORT. She won't. She went down the stairs quicker than she came up.

TEISSIER [*to* MARIE]. Good-by, Miss Marie, and good health to you. [*He leaves her, and then comes back*] Stay as you are. You won't lack lovers. If I were not so old, I'd get in line. [*He and* LEFORT *go out together*]

BOURDON. Well, madam?

MRS. VIGNERON. What have I done, Mr. Bourdon, to have such a scene?

BOURDON. I shall not regret that discussion, madam, if it shows you where your interests lie.

MRS. VIGNERON. Putting aside what has just passed, let's look at things as they are. I agree that Mr. Lefort is a man who lacks good breeding, but he has a good deal of common sense and a knack of getting things done. After all, what he proposes is nothing more than what my husband would have done, if he had lived.

BOURDON. Are you serious, madam, in what you are saying? Haven't you learned to appraise that architect's offers at their real value?

MRS. VIGNERON. By taking somebody else we could —

BOURDON. You are not satisfied yet? [*A pause*] Come here, young ladies; you are not in the way. Your mother is wandering in cloudland; help me get her back on earth. Mrs. Vigneron, I am going to present the matter in its best light. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that the real estate belongs to you — forgetting the creditors and mortgagees who have claims on it —

do you know what it would cost to finish those buildings of yours, of which the foundations have hardly been put in? Four to five hundred thousand francs! You know well that Mr. Lefort hasn't that amount. You cannot count on me to get it for you. And then, even if you could get it through me or anyone else, would it look well for a woman, I ask, to place herself at the head of a large establishment and throw herself into an enterprise that nobody could see the end of? This question that I am asking you is so serious that if it were brought up before the civil authorities, whose duty it is to help you bring up your minor children, it could be opposed on the ground that the childrens' inheritances — what little they have — were being risked in mere speculation. [*Speaking solemnly*] As a member of that civil board, pledged to look out for the best interest of minor children — the greatest duty in existence — I should oppose it myself. [*Silence*] Take heed, madam. I will not overstep the bounds of my duty by saying anything more. You know where my office is; I will await further orders there. [*He goes out*]

MRS. VIGNERON. Let's talk awhile, children. Don't all speak at once, and try to listen. Mr. Lefort —

JUDITH [*interrupting*]. Oh, Mr. Lefort!

MRS. VIGNERON. You don't know yet what I was going to say. Perhaps Mr. Lefort did express himself very clumsily, but I believe he has a good and loyal heart.

JUDITH. I don't believe so.

MRS. VIGNERON. Why?

JUDITH. I think he has the manner of a swindler.

MRS. VIGNERON. Oh! And you, Blanche; do you think Mr. Lefort has a swindler's manner?

BLANCHE. Yes, somewhat. I agree with Judith.

MRS. VIGNERON. So! Anyhow, his advice seems better to me than Mr. Bourdon's. All Mr. Bourdon's amounts to is that we shall sell our property. What do you think, Marie?

MARIE. I haven't anything to say just yet.

MRS. VIGNERON. We're making splendid headway, are we not? — Well, then, what do you think about Mr. Teissier?

MARIE. It seems to me that if we don't offend him, but show him a little regard, we may get help from Mr. Teissier.

BLANCHE. What's that, Marie? Mr. Teissier is the most treacherous and dangerous man in the world.

MRS. VIGNERON. Judith?

JUDITH. I don't know who is right, Marie or Blanche; but the way I look at it, we can't count on getting help from anyone but Mr. Bourdon.

MRS. VIGNERON. I don't agree with you, dear. Mr. Bourdon! Mr. Bourdon! There is one question that Mr. Bourdon should have asked me right off, and he never seemed once to think of it. Then I noticed something obscure about his words. What did he mean by saying: "Catiline is at the gates of Rome?" [*To* MARIE] Did you understand that?

MARIE. Yes, I understood it.

MRS. VIGNERON. You did? Is that so? We won't talk about it any more; you are wiser than I am. But Mr. Bourdon could have spoken to me about Catiline some other time. Why didn't he ask if we needed money? Now listen, children. If we must sell the real estate, we must. What we shall lose, we shall lose. But remember what your mother says; once and forever, as long as I live: they shall *not* touch the factory.

MARIE. You are wrong there, mama.

MRS. VIGNERON. As long as I live they sha'n't touch the factory!

MARIE. Mr. Teissier could sell it today. He has a legal right to do it.

MRS. VIGNERON. As long as I live —

MARIE. There is a law —

BLANCHE AND JUDITH. If there is a law!

MRS. VIGNERON. Come, don't bother me about your law. If I should go through many days like this, I couldn't stand it; you would soon be without either father or mother. [*She falls upon the couch, weeping*]

AUGUSTE [*entering*]. Here are some letters for you, ma'am.

MRS. VIGNERON [*to* MARIE]. Take these and read them, dear.

MARIE. This one is a letter from your dressmaker: "Dear Madam: We take the liberty of sending you your bill, and beg to remind you that it has passed the ordinary credit limit. Our cashier will call upon you to-day. Believe us, madam, yours very truly. P. S. May we call your attention to a brand new dress-goods called 'short-

term mourning,' which looks well on young women, and can be worn by misses with equally good effect." [*She opens and reads another letter*] "Dear Madam: Mr. Dubois hereby gives you permission to sub-let your apartment, which will not be difficult, provided you make a small sacrifice. Mr. Dubois would like to do more, but he cannot. If he should permit you to break a lease on account of the death of the lessee, he would be establishing a precedent which would cause him much trouble." [*Third letter*] "Dear Madam: I sent to your house last week concerning my bill against you, and my young lady representative was rudely treated by your servants, and could not make collection. Not being able to reach you, I do not know how to understand a delay which must not be further prolonged. I do not run after business, and as you know, madam, I do not advertise in the papers; I leave that to the big Parisian houses that charge you more on that account. If I am able to make hats at a surprisingly low price, at the same time showing originality and superior workmanship, it is merely because of my large business and regular collections."

[MARIE *prepares to read a fourth letter.* MRS. VIGNERON *stops her and begins to weep. The young girls look on without a word, with bowed heads, saddened and frightened*]

ACT III

The scene is the same as in the first and second acts.

ROSALIE. Sit down, ma'am.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*hesitating and annoyed*]. I don't know.

ROSALIE. Do as I tell you, ma'am. Sit down there and be comfortable, with your pretty little feet on this hassock.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Don't urge me, Rosalie. I am wondering whether it would be wiser to wait or to come again.

ROSALIE. Do as I say, ma'am. Wait. You'll get me in trouble with Blanchy if I let you go away without seeing her.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Blanche will see me a little later. She is just the one I came to see, and I want to talk to her about a very serious matter. I didn't think Mrs. Vigneron would have company at luncheon.

ROSALIE. Not company; no, there's no company.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. The ladies of the house are at luncheon; is that what you mean?

ROSALIE. Yes.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. They are not alone, are they?

ROSALIE. No.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Then there is somebody with them?

ROSALIE. Yes. [*In a low tone*] Mr. Teissier.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Oh, Mr. Teissier! [*Coming close to* ROSALIE] He comes here now, does he?

ROSALIE. Oftener than folks like to have him.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. But they give him a welcome?

ROSALIE. They have to. The young ladies are right in not liking him, but the need of being on good terms with him overcomes that feeling.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. On good terms with him? What for?

ROSALIE. For the sake of their fortune.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Yes, Rosalie, for the sake of their fortune [*moving away*] or for his.

ROSALIE. You're going to stay, aren't you, ma'am?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. No, I'm going. I've made up my mind. Mr. Teissier is here, and the ladies have business with him. What business? I don't want to embarrass anybody, or pry into any secrets. [*She goes toward the door*]

ROSALIE. Will you call again, ma'am?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. I'll call again.

ROSALIE. Surely?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Surely. Listen, Rosalie. If Mrs. Vigneron and her daughters — except Blanche, you understand — wish to go out, let them go; don't let them put themselves out for me. Blanche is the only one who need wait in for me. I want to speak with her once and for all. You are her old nurse; so you tell her to keep calm — to think it all over — to make up her mind to the inevitable — that it isn't my fault that her father is dead — that she must take into account her financial condition — and my son can't be responsible — that he can't — not by any means — Now, Rosalie, do you understand what I'm asking you to say?

ROSALIE. Certainly I understand, ma'am. But you mustn't expect me to say anything that would distress my little Blanchy.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. There, that's your bell. See what's wanted, and I'll find my own way out. [*She leaves*]

ROSALIE. She gives me the creeps, that woman does. I cross myself every time she comes in and goes out.

[*The third door at the rear opens.* TEISSIER *comes in with* MARIE *on his arm, and* MRS. VIGNERON *behind them. Then comes* JUDITH, *and finally* BLANCHE. ROSALIE *steps aside to let them pass; she stops* BLANCHE, *arranges her dress and embraces her, then goes out through the open door, closing it behind her*]

TEISSIER. Do you mind if I lean on you a little? I'm not used to eating so much at luncheon, and with such nice people. [*Stopping*] What did I say at the table?

MARIE. Different things.

TEISSIER. What about?

MARIE. About life in general.

TEISSIER. Did we say anything about your affairs?

MARIE. The subject didn't come up.

[*They proceed, going toward the right; then* MARIE *disengages herself and walks away*]

TEISSIER [*following her*]. Your sisters are nice; the oldest one especially is well built. Yet I prefer you. I haven't always been old. I can still tell a blond from a brunette. I'm very much pleased with you, understand?

MARIE. Pay a little attention to my mother.

TEISSIER. Why is it, Mrs. Vigneron, that Gaston, the boy that writes such fine I O U's, didn't have luncheon with us?

MRS. VIGNERON [*with some emotion*]. My son is engaged.

TEISSIER. He's gone soldiering. That's the best thing he could do. A soldier is lodged, fed and warmed at the expense of the government. What risk does he take? None but being killed. And then he doesn't need anything.

MRS. VIGNERON. My son did what he wished; but he will be sorry for it later. I wanted to arrange with you, Mr. Teissier, to put him in the factory; and if the factory, as I believe, doesn't go out of your hands or ours, Gaston would take his father's place in a few years. [*Silence*]

TEISSIER. Have you seen Bourdon?

MRS. VIGNERON. No. Should we see him?

TEISSIER [*embarrassed and making no reply, but turning to* MARIE]. Your sisters are nice; but they are city women. You can see that at a glance. No color. Looking at you, nobody would ever say that you had been brought up with them. In the summer I have roses in my garden, but they haven't the bloom your cheeks have. You and your mother and sisters must come and visit my country house. You are no longer children, so you won't hurt anything. You can have luncheon at home before you start, and be back in time for dinner. You haven't many diversions; that will be one for you.

MARIE. You mustn't expect us to come to see you, Mr. Teissier, before our position is easier. You know we haven't progressed a bit, just got more tangled up, that's all. We are being tormented now by our old tradesmen. They have become very impatient creditors.

TEISSIER [*embarrassed, and making no reply, but turning to* MRS. VIGNERON]. If you want to go on with your work, madam, don't bother about me. Your girls will keep me company until I go.

MRS. VIGNERON. Stay as long as you please; we sha'n't send you away. [*Going over to* MARIE] Have you spoken to Mr. Teissier?

MARIE. No, not yet.

MRS. VIGNERON. Are you ashamed to?

MARIE. Yes, I am ashamed to. Twelve thousand francs is a big sum to ask for.

MRS. VIGNERON. Let's not ask for it.

MARIE. And where shall we be tomorrow if that dressmaker puts her bill in the hands of a sheriff? She will do just as she said.

MRS. VIGNERON. Do you want me to take Mr. Teissier aside and save you from doing it?

MARIE. No. This is the time to show courage, and I am going to show it.

TEISSIER [*seated on the couch beside* JUDITH]. Do you get along well with your sisters?

JUDITH. Very well.

TEISSIER. Who is the cleverest of you three?

JUDITH. Marie.

TEISSIER. Miss Marie. [*He looks at her*] Does she think very much about getting married?

JUDITH. She never says anything about it.

TEISSIER. Yet people think she is pretty.

JUDITH. She is more than pretty; she is charming.

TEISSIER. Exactly. [*He looks again at* MARIE] She isn't a living skeleton, like so many of the young girls, and she isn't a heavyweight, either. Has she a firm character?

JUDITH. Very.

TEISSIER. Simple tastes?

JUDITH. Very simple.

TEISSIER. Is she the kind of a woman who would stay at home and like to take care of an old person?

JUDITH. Maybe.

TEISSIER. Could a person give her the keys of a house, without being uneasy about it? [JUDITH *looks at him in astonishment*] Then what's she thinking of? Why doesn't she have a talk with me? [*Rising and speaking to* JUDITH] I don't want to keep you, miss. Go over there [*pointing at* BLANCHE] where your sister is sitting, looking as though she were doing penance. [MARIE *approaches him. He joins her and they come out to the front of the stage*] What do you call that little thing you have there?

MARIE. Just a purse.

TEISSIER. What for?

MARIE. A charity bazaar.

TEISSIER. For the poor? I see. You're working for them while they are loafing.

MARIE. Mr. Teissier, my mother wants me to ask something of you that she herself doesn't dare to ask.

TEISSIER. What is it?

MARIE. As I was telling you just now, it seems that our tradesmen have got their heads together. Where we once couldn't get them to send in their bills, now it is a question of which can get his money first.

TEISSIER. These people are within their rights in claiming their due.

MARIE. Unfortunately we haven't the amount necessary to settle with them. A pretty round sum. Twelve thousand francs. Mr. Teissier, please lend us this much more; you will be relieving us of many little embarrassments, which are sometimes worse than big ones. [*A pause*]

TEISSIER. Have you seen Bourdon?

MARIE. No. Do we have to see Bourdon?

TEISSIER. You know well that this state of things can't last, either for you or for me. Twelve thousand francs that you want and twenty thousand you owe me make thirty-two thousand francs that have come out of my pocket. I am not risking anything, of course. I know where to get back that money. But it certainly must come back to me. You won't be surprised to learn that I have taken steps toward that end. Don't cry; don't cry. You have time enough ahead of you to get sunken eyes and hollow cheeks. Keep your twenty-year-old advantages; a little girl of your age, blooming and flourishing, is unhappy only when she wants to be. Understand me? Only when she wants to be. [*He quits her suddenly, takes his hat and goes over to* MRS. VIGNERON] Your second daughter has just told me that you need twelve thousand francs. You needn't add anything to what she said; it isn't necessary. Just you wait while I go and get the money. [*He goes out abruptly*]

MRS. VIGNERON. Thanks, Marie dear. It makes one feel so silly and shamefaced to have to take money from that old codger! At the last minute I really came near deciding not to ask him for it.

MARIE. It's done.

MRS. VIGNERON. Judith — where are you going, child?

JUDITH. I'm going to leave you; I need sleep.

MRS. VIGNERON. Stay here, please do.

JUDITH. But, mama —

MRS. VIGNERON [*commandingly*]. Stay here! [JUDITH *obeys, and goes over to her mother*] Isn't our situation serious? Doesn't it interest you? We can't talk about it half enough.

JUDITH. What's the use talking about it? We are always saying over the same things without making the slightest decision. Don't you see it requires a different kind of woman than you to get us out of the scrape we are in?

MRS. VIGNERON. Soon you'll be saying that I am not doing my duty.

JUDITH. I don't say that. It isn't your fault that you don't understand anything about business.

MRS. VIGNERON. Then why don't you take charge of our business affairs?

JUDITH. Excuse me! I can't add a column of figures.

MRS. VIGNERON. Nobody is asking you to add a column of figures. We are asking you to be here, to take part in the discussion, and give us your opinion when you have any.

JUDITH. You know what my opinion is; and it won't change. We can't do anything, and there is nothing to do.

MRS. VIGNERON. But suppose they are robbing us?

JUDITH. Well, then they'll rob us. You can't stop them and I can't. Neither can Marie. She ought to see plainly that we must wait for something to turn up. As for me, I should like a thousand times better — yes, a thousand times — to settle the whole thing to-day and take what they leave us, because they really *are* willing to leave us something. Then, when we no longer had to think about the past, we could think about the future.

MRS. VIGNERON. You talk very glibly about the future, Judith.

JUDITH. It worries me, but it doesn't frighten me. I think Blanche is by far the most unfortunate of us. She is going to lose the man she loves.

MARIE. Nobody said she was going to lose him.

JUDITH. On the contrary, everybody says so. It's as clear as daylight that Blanche won't be married. If I were in her place, I shouldn't wait for Mr. de Saint-Genis to ask for his release; I'd throw him over myself.

MRS. VIGNERON. Now just see, Judith, what silly things you've been saying in the last five minutes. First you hurt me, and now you have discouraged one of your sisters and made the other one cry.

JUDITH [*going over to* BLANCHE]. Are you angry with me?

BLANCHE. No, I'm not angry with you. You don't know Mr. de Saint-Genis, or you wouldn't say such things. I was very glad to be able to bring him a dowry, but he won't love me less because I have lost it, and he will have just the same desire to marry me. All the trouble comes from his mother. But sooner or later mothers have to give in, and Mrs. de Saint-Genis will do just as the rest. She will find that the wisest thing is to give her consent, when she sees that we would marry without it. You are right, Judith, when you say that we are not defending ourselves very well. But though we may lack decision in dealing with our business affairs, I don't lack any in regard to my marriage.

MRS. VIGNERON. Oh, dear! I don't understand you, girls. You are always talking about decision: we lack decision; we must have decision. You don't say anything else. And when I propose some real idea, you are the first ones to throw cold water on it. Come now, yes or no: do you want me to dismiss Mr. Bourdon and get another lawyer?

MARIE. Who?

MRS. VIGNERON. Who? The first one that comes along. [*To* JUDITH] That man, for instance, who sent us his card.

JUDITH. Take him; I'd just as lief.

MARIE. I'm opposed to it.

MRS. VIGNERON. Well, children, I'll have to settle it. If Mr. Bourdon says one more word to me — just one more word — that seems out of place to me, I'll get rid of him and send for this other man. But first of all, where is this man's card? [*Silence*] Look in the desk for it, Judith, and look carefully. Marie, you look on the piano, perhaps it's over there. Blanche, you look, too. Do something! Look on the shelf over the fireplace. [*Another silence*] You needn't look any more, children. I have it in my pocket. [*To* JUDITH] What are you laughing about?

JUDITH. I had to laugh. I was thinking that our enemies know what they do with *their* things.

MRS. VIGNERON [*sadly*]. Are you going to begin again?

JUDITH. No; I'm not going to, and I'm sorry for what I said. If I said anything wrong, I didn't mean to. I wish this whole business was over with. It makes us irritable and sour-tempered; and instead of fighting our enemies we quarrel with one another. One might think that we should have loved each other more when we were happier; but the contrary is true. [*She kisses her mother*]

[MARIE *and* BLANCHE *make up. All are greatly affected*]

ROSALIE [*entering*]. Mr. Bourdon, ma'am.

JUDITH. This time I *am* going.

MRS. VIGNERON. Go to bed, children. I'll talk with Mr. Bourdon.

[*The three girls leave*]

BOURDON [*entering*]. Seeing how useless my previous advice proved, Mrs.

Vigneron, I had intended to let matters take their course and not come to see you until you were ready for me. Believe me, I have no hand in the bad news I have been asked to bring you.

MRS. VIGNERON. I am beginning to get used to bad news, Mr. Bourdon.

BOURDON. You must, madam, you must. In your position, courage and resignation are of prime necessity.

MRS. VIGNERON. It strikes me, Mr. Bourdon, that my affairs give you a good deal of trouble, considering the little you get out of them. I have just heard of a man, very upright and intelligent, who will take charge of them.

BOURDON. Very well, madam, very well. Perhaps it would have been a little more seemly to have saved me this visit by letting me know of your decision earlier. Never mind. Shall I send all your papers here, or will they call at my office for them?

MRS. VIGNERON [*disconcerted*]. But I haven't made any arrangements with this man yet. Wait awhile; there's no hurry.

BOURDON. On the contrary, madam, there is hurry. And since you have found, as you say, a capable, true and tried man, he shouldn't lose any time getting acquainted with the details of your estate — a matter of which he knows absolutely nothing. He is a business man, I suppose?

MRS. VIGNERON. Who told you he was a business man?

BOURDON. I guessed as much. Would it be indiscreet of me to ask who this man is? [MRS. VIGNERON, *after some hesitation, takes the card from her pocket and hands it to him; he returns it, smiling*] One last piece of advice, Mrs. Vigneron, which you may take or not, as you please. Duhamel, whose card this is, is an old lawyer who was debarred for embezzlement. Perhaps you do not know that in the legal profession black sheep are summarily expelled. After that setback, Duhamel set up a business office near the Court Buildings. It isn't my business to tell you what goes on in his office; but you will come to me with news about it before long.

MRS. VIGNERON. Tear up that card, Mr. Bourdon, and tell me what you came to see me about.

BOURDON. Mrs. Vigneron, you really deserve to be left in this man Duhamel's clutches. All he would have to do would be to come to an understanding with another scoundrel like himself — Lefort, for instance — and that would be the last of Mr. Vigneron's estate. You are angry with me because I spoil your illusions. Am I wrong to do so? Judge for yourself. In the face of your obstinate resolve to keep your real estate — a resolve I do not favor — I had to make an accurate survey of the situation. Well, in going over the bundle of mortgages, I found that one of them had fallen due. I wrote immediately to ask for a renewal. This request was refused. We need sixty-odd thousand francs to take up this mortgage, and we need it right now.

MRS. VIGNERON. What are we going to do?

BOURDON. That's what I am asking you. And that isn't all. Time is passing; are you ready to pay the inheritance taxes?

MRS. VIGNERON. But, Mr. Bourdon, according to you, our real estate is worth nothing; and where there is nothing, the authorities can't claim anything.

BOURDON. You are wrong. The authorities, in dealing with an estate, chase no wild geese. They collect taxes where they see the chance, regardless of who ought to be paying them.

MRS. VIGNERON. Are you sure of that?

BOURDON. What a question, Mrs. Vigneron! Why, my office boy, a twelve-year-old boy, knows those things as well as I do. Now you can just see what a hard time we have with clients like you — entirely respectable, of course, but also entirely ignorant. If by some inadvertence we had not taken up this point together, and then, later on — in going over the accounts after the inevitable sale of your real estate — you had found set down "Inheritance tax: so much," who knows but you might have said: "Mr. Bourdon put that money in his own pocket."

MRS. VIGNERON. Such an idea never would have occurred to me.

BOURDON. Well, Mrs. Vigneron, you are a little suspicious that I am not fulfilling my duty toward you in all respects; and that accusation is grave enough. But let it go. While you are floundering about, doing nothing, waiting for something or other to turn up, that won't turn up, Teissier, like the business man he is, has gone right ahead. He has put experts into the factory.

They have finished their report. In short, Teissier has just sent me instructions to put your factory up for sale.

MRS. VIGNERON. I don't believe you.

BOURDON. What, madam, you don't believe me? [*He takes a letter from his pocket and hands it to her*] Teissier's letter is clear enough; right to the point, just as he always writes.

MRS. VIGNERON. Will you leave that letter with me, Mr. Bourdon?

BOURDON. I don't see what you could do with it, and it ought to remain in my files.

MRS. VIGNERON. I'll return it to you to-morrow, if Mr. Teissier persists in his determination.

BOURDON. As you please.

MRS. VIGNERON. You don't know, Mr. Bourdon, that our dealings with Mr. Teissier have become very friendly.

BOURDON. Why shouldn't they be?

MRS. VIGNERON. He likes my daughters.

BOURDON. That's fine, Mrs. Vigneron, that's very fine.

MRS. VIGNERON. Why, he even took luncheon with us to-day.

BOURDON. I should be more surprised if you had taken luncheon with him.

MRS. VIGNERON. Well, we have let Mr. Teissier know about our straitened circumstances, and he has consented to lend us a pretty round sum of money; and it isn't the first, either.

BOURDON. Why do you ask Teissier for money? Am I not here? I told you, Mrs. Vigneron, that you could not look to me for four or five hundred thousand francs for imaginary building operations. Teissier wouldn't let you have it either, I'm dead sure of that. But it is I, your lawyer, who ought to provide for your everyday needs, and you would have pleased me if you had not waited for me to tell you so.

MRS. VIGNERON. I beg your pardon, Mr. Bourdon; I did doubt you for a moment. You mustn't be angry with me; my head is whirling in the midst of these complications; and you were right when you said that I am ignorant. If I could do as I wished, I would stay in my bedroom and mourn for my husband; but what would people say of a mother who did not defend her children as best she could? [*She sobs and throws herself down on the couch*]

BOURDON [*going over to her, and speaking softly*]. I will try hard to get Teissier to put off the sale of the factory, but on one condition: that you give up your real estate. [*She looks at him fixedly*] You certainly must understand why I suggest this condition, which is wholly to your advantage. I can't think of spending useless energy and serving your interests on one point only to have you getting me in hot water on another. [*Silence*]

MRS. VIGNERON [*to* ROSALIE, *who comes in*]. What is it, Rosalie?

ROSALIE. Mr. Merckens wishes to see you, ma'am.

MRS. VIGNERON [*rising*]. Very well. Show him in. [*To* BOURDON] Do you mind having Mr. Merckens with you a moment, while I talk this over with my daughters?

BOURDON. Go ahead, Mrs. Vigneron; go and talk it over with your daughters. [*She goes out at the left*]

MERCKENS [*entering*]. How d'ye do, Mr. Bourdon.

BOURDON. How are you, young man? How have you been since that unlucky dinner when I saw you last?

MERCKENS. The dinner wasn't bad, but unfortunately we had to eat it on top of a rather nasty spectacle.

BOURDON. Right you are. Poor Vigneron was brought in right under our noses . . .

MERCKENS. What did you have in mind when you took me to the restaurant that day?

BOURDON. That was your idea. You said to me, as we were coming out of the house: "I don't like the idea of going home with a white necktie and an empty stomach." I said: "Let's dine somewhere, and then think up something to do during the rest of the evening." Well, we had a half-hearted meal, and the only thing we wanted to do was to go to bed. You see, people are always more sensitive to the death of others than they imagine, and it is particularly the case with a violent death. In spite of yourself you can't help thinking that the same thing might happen to you the very next day; and you don't feel much like laughing about it.

MERCKENS. Are you waiting to see Mrs. Vigneron?

BOURDON. Yes. I ought not to wait, but Mrs. Vigneron is no ordinary client of mine, and I spoil her. You don't give lessons here any more, I suppose?

MERCKENS. Miss Judith hasn't taken any since her father died.

BOURDON. If you'll take my advice, you won't count on having her for a pupil any more, and you'll look somewhere else.

MERCKENS. Why?

BOURDON. I know what I'm talking about. This family's new circumstances are going to force them to economize.

MERCKENS. No?

BOURDON. Yes.

MERCKENS. Really?

BOURDON. Really. [*A pause*]

MERCKENS. But Mr. Vigneron was wealthy.

BOURDON. He wasn't wealthy; he made a lot of money, that's all.

MERCKENS. He didn't spend it on himself.

BOURDON. He speculated with it, and that's often worse.

MERCKENS. I thought that husky chap was going to leave his wife and children a fortune.

BOURDON. A fortune! You'll do me a favor if you'll show me where it is. Any minute, now, the Vigneron family are likely to find themselves in a bad predicament; and I can tell you, without shouting about my devotion to their interests, that they'll owe it to me if they save a loaf of bread.

MERCKENS. Impossible!

BOURDON. That's just where it stands, young man. Keep this news confidential, and make what use you can of it. [*A pause*]

MERCKENS [*in a low voice*]. What do they say about it here?

BOURDON. What would you expect them to say?

MERCKENS. These women can't be in very good spirits.

BOURDON. Well, what has happened to them hasn't been any cause for rejoicing.

MERCKENS. Tears?

BOURDON. Tears!

MERCKENS [*going over to him with a smile*]. Do me a slight favor, will you? Be good enough to tell Mrs. Vigneron that I only had a minute to spare, that I didn't want to bother her, and that I'll call again shortly.

BOURDON. You *will* call again?

MERCKENS. Not very likely.

BOURDON. Stay awhile, then, now that you are here, young man. You'll be repaid in listening to the poor woman, and she'll be thankful for a little kindness. She is really beginning to doubt whether anyone is interested in her misfortunes.

MERCKENS. It's certain that Miss Judith won't continue with her lessons?

BOURDON. That's very certain.

MERCKENS. You don't see anything ahead which could put Mrs. Vigneron and her daughters on their feet?

BOURDON. I do not.

MERCKENS. Then you bet I'm off. That suits me better. No jabbering nonsense such as I could talk to Mrs. Vigneron would make her feel any better. I know myself too well. I should probably make some awful break; while you, with your great command of language, can find some excuse for me. How's that?

BOURDON. Just as you say.

MERCKENS. Thanks. Good-by, Mr. Bourdon.

BOURDON. Good-by.

MERCKENS [*returning*]. Up to what time are you at your office?

BOURDON. Till seven o'clock.

MERCKENS. I'm coming after you one of these days, and we'll go to the theatre together. Is that all right?

BOURDON. Indeed it is.

MERCKENS. Which do you like best, grand opera or musical comedy?

BOURDON. Musical comedy.

MERCKENS. Musical comedy! You want something light. All right, we'll see that kind of a show. Say, I hope this time we sha'n't have our evening spoiled by an apoplectic fit. So long!

BOURDON. So long, young man.

[MERCKENS *goes out at the rear while* MRS. VIGNERON *is coming in at the left*]

MRS. VIGNERON. Why did Mr. Merckens go away without waiting for me?

BOURDON. The young man was very much embarrassed, Mrs. Vigneron. When he saw me here, he understood that you were already occupied, and he thought best to postpone his visit until some more convenient time.

MRS. VIGNERON. He shouldn't have gone. I just told my daughters he was here, and they were going to entertain him.

BOURDON. Well, Mrs. Vigneron, what is the result of your conference with your daughters?

MRS. VIGNERON. Nothing, Mr. Bourdon.

BOURDON. What are you going to wait for now?

MRS. VIGNERON. We sha'n't do anything until we have seen Mr. Teissier.

BOURDON. And what do you expect he will say to you?

MRS. VIGNERON. There is no doubt about his intentions, that's true. He wants to sell our factory as much as he did yesterday. But this move would be so disastrous for us that he wouldn't dare to have a finger in it. We are going to have a straight talk with Mr. Teissier and we sha'n't hide the fact from him that he isn't treating us square.

BOURDON. Not square? That's rather strong talk. I doubt very much, Mrs. Vigneron, whether you can change his mind by using that kind of language to him.

MRS. VIGNERON. I'm not going to do the talking to Mr. Teissier. I lost my temper the first time, and I could easily do so again. Besides, considering the turn our affairs have taken, I would let them go as they please now, were it not for the fact that one of my daughters shows more perseverance than the rest of us — her sisters and myself. Mr. Teissier really seems to be well disposed toward her; so perhaps she can succeed in making him change his mind.

BOURDON. Excuse me — you say Teissier has taken a liking to one of your daughters?

MRS. VIGNERON. At least, we think so.

BOURDON. Which one?

MRS. VIGNERON. My second daughter, Marie.

BOURDON. And does Miss Marie reciprocate this kindly feeling shown by Mr. Teissier?

MRS. VIGNERON. What in the world are you thinking about, Mr. Bourdon. You're not figuring on making a match, are you?

BOURDON. Wait a minute, Mrs. Vigneron. If Teissier were disposed to marry this young lady, she wouldn't do a bad stroke of business in accepting him; but I had something else in mind. You know Teissier is no longer young; he has reached an age where the slightest sickness might carry him off. If this very sudden affection he is showing toward your daughter should lead him, later on, to make some provisions for her, perhaps it would be just as well if you didn't antagonize the old man at this point.

MRS. VIGNERON. We expect nothing from Mr. Teissier. Let him live as long as he can and do what he pleases with his money. But this factory he wants to sell belongs to both of us, and not to him alone. To do as he pleases with my husband's work and my children's property would be to abuse the rights given him by the law.

BOURDON. I won't argue further.

ROSALIE [*entering*]. Mr. Teissier is here, ma'am.

MRS. VIGNERON. Just a minute, Rosalie. [*To* BOURDON] Is it necessary for you to meet?

BOURDON. Yes; I should prefer it. Please understand perfectly, Mrs. Vigneron, that I am working for Teissier as well as you. I make no difference between you. All I want is for you to come to some decision, so that I may know what to do.

MRS. VIGNERON. Very well. I'll send my daughter in. [*She goes out at the left, gesturing to* ROSALIE *to have* TEISSIER *come in*]

[TEISSIER *enters*]

BOURDON. You here — you?

TEISSIER. Yes, I'm here.

BOURDON. What's this I've been hearing? Nobody sees you anywhere else but here.

TEISSIER. I have been here several times. What of it?

BOURDON. You are hostile to the interests of this family, and yet you sit at their table?

TEISSIER. What are you kicking about, as long as what I do doesn't interfere with you?

BOURDON. My position isn't an easy one as it is. You are making it more difficult.

TEISSIER. Go right ahead as we agreed, Bourdon — do you understand? Don't bother yourself about my doings.

BOURDON. Miss Marie will get what she wants out of you.

TEISSIER. Miss Marie will get nothing.

BOURDON. It seems you have a weakness for this young lady.

TEISSIER. Who told you so?

BOURDON. Her mother.

TEISSIER. What is she meddling for?

BOURDON. You had better get ready for a carefully planned siege on the part of your simple maiden. I warn you they are looking to her to bring you to terms.

TEISSIER. Take your hat, Bourdon, and go back to your office.

BOURDON. All right; just as you say. [*Returning to* TEISSIER] I needn't

wait any longer, eh? Shall I start the thing going?

TEISSIER. Sure! [*Calling* BOURDON *back*] Listen, Bourdon! I told you about my talk with Lefort, didn't I? He's an ugly customer, and he's right after us. The wise thing will be to go easy with him, don't you think? He is still in charge of the building operations.

BOURDON. What? Have you had dealings with Lefort, after that wretched scene when he insulted both of us?

TEISSIER. Still thinking about that, are you? If we should refuse to see people just because a few strong words had passed between us, then we couldn't see anybody at all.

BOURDON. Well, it's your business, after all. I don't know why I should mix into it. I promised you should get the real estate, and you shall. The rest doesn't worry me. [MARIE *enters; he goes over to her and speaks in a low tone*] I leave you with Teissier, my dear young lady. Try to convince him; a woman sometimes succeeds where we fail. If you get anything out of him, you will be more fortunate and cleverer than I am. [*He goes out*]

TEISSIER. Here is the money you asked me for. You told me it was intended for your tradespeople. Meet them yourself. Look sharp at the bills they render; don't be afraid to beat them down as much as you can; and, above all, take good care not to pay the same bill twice. [*Detaining her*] Where is my receipt?

MARIE. I'll give it to you by and by.

TEISSIER. I ought to take it in one hand while I am handing over the money with the other. Just this minute I am flustered. [*She goes to the writing-desk and puts the bank-notes in a drawer; then she comes back. There is a moment of silence*] You have something to tell me, and I have something to tell you, too. Come sit beside me, won't you, and have a nice friendly talk. [*They sit down*] What do you figure on doing?

MARIE. I don't understand your question.

TEISSIER. My question is simple enough, nevertheless. I told you before that there would be fifty thousand francs coming to you; no more. You can't think of holding on to this apartment and keeping open house until your last cent is gone. What do you figure on doing?

MARIE. A relative of my mother's who lives in the country has invited us to come and settle near him.

TEISSIER. Your mother's relative is like all relatives. He made that suggestion thinking to get an invitation in return; he won't cling to the idea when it will be his turn to carry out the suggestion.

MARIE. Then we'll stay in Paris.

TEISSIER. What are you going to do in Paris?

MARIE. My oldest sister is ready to give music lessons, when the time comes.

TEISSIER. Good. Your oldest sister, if she carries out that idea, will promptly let the rest of the family support themselves. She will want her money herself, and she will be right.

MARIE. But I count on getting something to do, too.

TEISSIER. What?

MARIE. That's it, what? I don't know yet. It's so hard for a woman to find work, and she gets so little for it.

TEISSIER. That brings us to what I wanted to say. [*A pause; he continues with some hesitation and embarrassment*] I know of a house where, if you want to, you can come to live. You will get your room and board there, and every month a small sum which you can save up for a rainy day. You will not have to look any further for a place.

MARIE. Whose house? Yours?

TEISSIER [*with an equivocal half-smile*]. Mine.

MARIE [*after a display of emotion; not knowing how she ought to interpret his words, nor how she ought to reply*]. What you propose is impossible. In the first place, my mother would not let me leave her.

TEISSIER. Yes; I had an idea your mother might interpose some opposition. But you are of age now and can consider your best interests without consulting anybody.

MARIE. I told you no, Mr. Teissier; *no!*

TEISSIER. Wouldn't you be mighty glad to let your family stay in the ditch and go out and do something on your own account? That's the way I should feel, if I were in your place.

MARIE. That isn't the way I feel.

TEISSIER. What good do you see in all scrambling around together, instead of going your separate ways?

MARIE. Just the advantage of not being separated. [*Leaving him*] Sometimes it is good to have consolation nearby. That way you are not troubled so much with certain sudden events that would otherwise be disconcerting. [*A pause*]

TEISSIER. It is some time now since I began coming here. I don't stay away from my business without a good reason. You aren't stupid — you have a quick wit. You ought to be able to see through it.

MARIE. I was thinking of something else.

TEISSIER. What?

MARIE. I was thinking only of my family. I can think only of the fate that awaits them, now that they have lost everything.

TEISSIER [*with a smile*]. So you are trying to get the best of me and worm something out of me for them?

MARIE. Oh, Mr. Teissier! I have enough sorrow without your adding anything to it. You want to know what I thought; I will tell you. I was thinking that you are no longer young, that you live a very dreary and lonely life, that you have no children, and so you like the company of other people — those were my thoughts. Yet you were right, I admit. We did not have you coming here before my father died; and we shouldn't have begun afterward. We shall have to take things as they come, meeting our difficulties courageously, and telling ourselves that after all women are never unhappy when they love each other, and are brave, and stand by one another. [*A pause*]

TEISSIER. How many are there of you? You, your mother and your two sisters?

MARIE. And Rosalie.

TEISSIER. Where does Rosalie come in?

MARIE. She is a saint. She brought us all up.

TEISSIER. What do you do to keep your servants? I could never get one attached to me. There are four of you — Rosalie doesn't count. Unfortunately, four is too many; you can understand that. Even to please a little friend I want to have with me, I can't be responsible for a whole family. They would bore me to death.

MARIE. Nobody asked you to; and nobody dreamed of such a thing.

TEISSIER. I didn't want to tell you, but you guessed it. A fellow doesn't complain of being alone as long as he is young; but at my age it is tiresome and unsafe.

MARIE. If you are alone, it's because you prefer to be.

TEISSIER. I ought to get married?

MARIE. It isn't necessary to get married to have people around you. You still have your parents.

TEISSIER. I don't see them any more, because I wanted to get out of reach of their demands for money; they are starving. I want very much to get hold of a little woman of simple tastes, kind and trustworthy, who will conduct herself decently in my house, and who won't steal everything in sight. Perhaps later on I'll see whether I ought to marry her. But you women are all lambs before marriage, and God knows what afterward. I would regulate my conduct according to hers; she would not be badly off while I was living, and she'd have no cause to complain after I died. Married or not, it would be just the same for her.

MARIE. Take your hat, Mr. Teissier, and go away. I don't want to have you near me another minute. I believe you are unhappy, and I pity you. I believe your proposal was an honest and proper one, and I thank you for it. But it could have another meaning, a meaning so loathsome that my heart trembles at the very thought of it. Go away.

TEISSIER [*standing, embarrassed, blubbering*]. Just stop and think of what you are saying to me.

MARIE. No more! Not a word! I ought to be ashamed of having spoken to you about my family; I ought to be ashamed for them as well as for myself. Think it over. Consider what kind of a man my father was, and what you owe to his honesty, to his work, to his memory. [*She goes hurriedly to the desk, takes out the banknotes and hands them back to him*] Take your money. Don't be embarrassed; take it. Mr. Bourdon has just offered to help us, and we shall get from him what we could not have asked of you. Go now! Go, before I call Rosalie to show you out. [*A pause; ROSALIE enters*] Here she is now. What is it, Rosalie?

ROSALIE. Mrs. de Saint-Genis is here.

MARIE. Very well, show her in.

ROSALIE. What's the matter, dearie;

you are blushing? [*Looking alternately from* MARIE *to* TEISSIER] I hope nobody has said anything to you they shouldn't?

MARIE. Show Mrs. de Saint-Genis in.

TEISSIER. I'll go. I'll stop in and see Bourdon on my way, as to whether there is still a way to fix things up; but don't count too much on it. Good-by!

ROSALIE. It isn't wise to leave such a child with a man of his age!

[MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS, *entering, encounters* TEISSIER *on his way out*]

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. How do you do, Miss Vigneron. I never come here these days without meeting Mr. Teissier. Is that a good sign? Are you going to come to terms with him?

MARIE. No, Mrs. de Saint-Genis.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Pshaw! I thought you were.

MARIE. Why?

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. An old man ought to find it pleasant to be in a house like yours.

MARIE. Mr. Teissier came to-day for the last time.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Then I can sincerely say I am sorry for you. Is your sister at home?

MARIE. Yes.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Please have her come here. Don't bother your mother; it isn't necessary; I can see her another time. I want to talk with Blanche.

MARIE. She'll be right in. [*Goes out*]

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. It is decidedly better to have a talk with this young woman and tell her straight out that the marriage is not postponed, but broken off. It is better for her to know where she stands, and it will clear my own mind, too. For the first time in his life George was going contrary to my wishes. He clung to his sweetheart, and wanted to marry her. Fortunately another good match came along, and I gave him his choice — to obey me or never see me again. He gave in. But what a brigand a young man twenty-three years old can be! And as for this giddy miss, who couldn't wait until she was married — well, so much the worse for her.

BLANCHE [*entering*]. Oh, I am so glad to see you, Mrs. de Saint-Genis!

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. How do you do, child; how do you do.

BLANCHE. Give me a good hug!

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Of course I will.

BLANCHE. You know I love you so much.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Come, Blanche, dear, don't get so excited. I have come to-day to talk seriously with you; so listen to me like the great big woman you are. It is time, at your age, to use a little reason. [*She sits down*] My son loves you, child; I tell you very frankly, he loves you a great deal. Don't interrupt me. I know, too, that you feel somewhat the same toward him — a light, thoughtless affection such as young girls often have when they meet a nice young man.

BLANCHE. Oh, Mrs. de Saint-Genis, you are disparaging a feeling which goes very much deeper than that.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Well, I was wrong, then. Love is a very fine thing, very vague and poetic; but a passion, however great it may be, never lasts very long, and never gets anywhere. I know what I am talking about. You can't pay the rent and the baker's bill with that kind of currency. You know I am not rich; my son's position is not yet assured; and certain deplorable circumstances have endangered your domestic situation, and perhaps will ruin you. Now, my child, I want to ask you if under these circumstances it would be very discreet to go on with a marriage which promises so unfavorably?

BLANCHE [*quickly*]. We ought to be married, Mrs. de Saint-Genis, and we are going to be.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*sweetly*]. You are, if I say so.

BLANCHE. You will give your consent.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. I don't think so.

BLANCHE. Yes, Mrs. de Saint-Genis; yes, you will! There are affections so sincere that even a mother has no right to come between them. There are promises so sacred that a man is dishonored if he does not fulfil them.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. What promises are you talking about? [*Silence*] I admit, if that suits you, that a marriage was planned between you and my son; but it was subject to certain conditions, and it is not my fault if you cannot live up to them. I was hoping, child, you would think of that yourself.

I was hoping you would bow in submission before a changed situation which is nobody's fault, but which necessarily alters the expectations of you both.

BLANCHE. George does not talk that way, Mrs. de Saint-Genis. His expectations are the same as ever. The loss of our money hasn't affected him in the least bit, and I think he is only more eager to marry me.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Leave my son out of the matter, won't you? I tell him every day he is too young yet to know what he does or says.

BLANCHE. George is twenty-three.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Twenty-three! Indeed!

BLANCHE. At that age, Mrs. de Saint-Genis, a man has passions, and will-power, and certain rights.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. You insist on talking about my son — very well, we'll talk about him. Are you so sure of his feelings? I don't see them in the same light as you. Placed, as he is, between an affection which is dear to him and a future in which he is interested, the poor boy is uncertain, hesitating.

BLANCHE [*rising suddenly*]. You are deceiving me, Mrs. de Saint-Genis.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. No, child, I am not deceiving you — no, indeed! I have given my son the benefit of my serious reflection, and I should be sorry for him if he did not make good use of it. Another thing: do we ever know what is going on in a man's brain? George is no more sincere than the next man. Perhaps he is only waiting for my order to get out of an embarrassing situation.

BLANCHE. Well, give him that order.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. He would obey it.

BLANCHE. No, Mrs. de Saint-Genis.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. I assure you he would, even if reluctantly.

BLANCHE. If it comes to that, Mrs. de Saint-Genis, your son would decide to confess to you something he has withheld out of respect for me.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. What confession? [*Silence*] So! I thought you would be the first one to break the reserve on that subject. You may spare yourself any delicate confidence. I know all about it. [BLANCHE, *confused and blushing, runs to* MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS *and throws herself at her feet, with her head on the older woman's knees;* MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS *rebukes her, caressing her all the while*] I don't care to inquire, child, whether you or George was responsible. It is your mother and I who are at fault, for leaving you two children together when you should have been watched. You see, I do not attach any undue importance to the result of a moment of forgetfulness, justified by your youth, and all the surrounding circumstances. You ought to want your fault to remain a secret; my son is an honorable man who would never betray you. So much said, the next question is: is it necessary for both of you to sacrifice your whole lives for the sake of a slip? Wouldn't it be better to forget it?

BLANCHE [*rising*]. Never. [*A pause*]

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*has risen and her tone changes*]. You will not be surprised, Blanche, if my son doesn't come here any more.

BLANCHE. I want to hear that from *him*.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Are you hoping he will disobey his mother?

BLANCHE. Yes; to do his duty.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. You should not have forgotten yours, in the first place.

BLANCHE. Go ahead, wound me, humiliate me; I know I deserve it.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. I feel more like pitying you, Blanche, than hurting you. But it seems to me that a young girl, after a misfortune like yours, should bow her head and submit.

BLANCHE. You shall see, Mrs. de Saint-Genis, what a young girl can do toward getting the reparation due her.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Well, what will you do?

BLANCHE. I'll find out first whether your son has two kinds of talk, one for you and another for me. I don't say yet that he has. He knows what you want, and so he conceals his own thoughts from you. But if I am dealing with a coward who hides behind his mother's skirts, he needn't think he can get rid of me so easily. Everywhere, everywhere he goes, I shall injure him. I'll ruin his standing, and spoil his future.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. You'll get yourself talked about that way; that's all. Perhaps that's what you want to do. Fortunately, your mother will stop that. She'll think a stain on the family's name is enough without adding a scandal to it. Good day, Blanche.

BLANCHE [*holding her*]. Don't go, Mrs. de Saint-Genis.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*sweetly*]. We have nothing more to say.

BLANCHE. Stay here. See, I am weeping! I am suffering! Feel my hand; I am burning up with fever.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Yes; I understand the frame of mind you are in; but that will pass. Whereas, if you should be married to my son, your regrets and his would last forever.

BLANCHE. We love each other.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. To-day, yes — but to-morrow?

BLANCHE. Give us your consent, I implore you.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Must I repeat that word you just said to me? Never!

[BLANCHE *leaves her and walks back and forth across the stage in a state of great emotion and violent grief; then she drops into an armchair*]

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS [*going up to* BLANCHE]. I am very sorry, child, to seem so cruel and to leave you in this condition. But I am right; absolutely right. A woman of my age and experience, who has seen all there is to see in this world, knows the true value of things and doesn't exaggerate one thing at the expense of another.

BLANCHE [*throwing herself on her knees*]. Listen, Mrs. de Saint-Genis. What will become of me if your son does not marry me? It is his duty. There is nothing nobler or kinder in a man than to cling to the woman he loves. Believe me, if it were an ordinary engagement, I shouldn't humiliate myself to the extent of holding him back. Yes, I should break my heart rather than offer it to one who disdained it, or was unworthy of it. But your son must marry me; I say again it is his duty. Everything gives way before that fact. You speak about the future. The future will be as he pleases. I am thinking only of the past. I should die of shame and sorrow.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Child that you are, to speak of dying at your age! Come, get up and listen to me now. I see that you really do love my son more than I thought, if you still cling to a boy who is almost poverty-stricken. But if I should consent to this marriage, in a year — yes, in six months, you would bitterly reproach me for my weakness. Love would pass, but you would have a household still. What do you think would be your lot then? Shabby, worried, vulgar, nursing your children yourself, while your discontented husband would be reproaching you all the time on account of the sacrifice he had made for you. Do what I ask. Make the sacrifice yourself instead. Can't you see how different all will be then? George will not have abandoned you; it will be you who have dismissed him generously. He will be under obligation to you. You will hold forever a place way down deep in his heart. Men always remain sensitive to the memory of a woman they have truly loved, even for an hour. It is so rare! And what will happen to you after that? I'll tell you. Little by little the love for my son, which seems so tremendous to you just now, will disappear. Yes; quicker than you think. You are young, pretty, full of charm for young men. Ten, yes, twenty, young fellows will come along. You will choose, not the most attractive, but the one who is best off. And on your wedding day you will think of me and say to yourself: "Mrs. de Saint-Genis was right."

BLANCHE. What kind of woman are you, Mrs. de Saint-Genis, to give me such advice as that? What would your son say if he knew it? I would rather be his mistress than the wife of another man.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. His mistress! Pretty words to come from you! My son shall know what you have just said. It's one more sign of your waywardness.

BLANCHE. No, no, Mrs. de Saint-Genis; don't repeat that awful word. I blushed when I said it.

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. His mistress! Evidently you can stand anything; so I am going to tell you all. I should never have broken off your marriage for a matter of dollars and cents. But I want my son to have a wife whose past is above suspicion, and who will give him no anxiety for the future. [*She goes toward the door*]

BLANCHE. Oh, oh, oh! You insult me, Mrs. de Saint-Genis, without any reason — without pity!

MRS. DE SAINT-GENIS. Let me go, young woman. His mistress! Why, that's the talk of a fallen woman! [*She repulses* BLANCHE *gently and goes out*]

BLANCHE. A fallen woman! She

dares to call me — Oh, God! [*She bursts into tears*] Oh, it's all over now! George is weak, his mother controls him . . . he will obey her. A fallen woman! [*She weeps increasingly*] A fine fellow like him! Not at all like that woman! And yet under her thumb! . . . I can't stand it. A little while ago my hands were burning hot; now they are cold as ice. [*She rings and comes to the front of the stage; she speaks in a broken voice*] He is young . . . barely twenty-three . . . gentle, refined, charming . . . some other woman will love him and marry him.

ROSALIE [*entering*]. Is it you, dearie, who rang for me?

BLANCHE [*going to her sadly*]. I'm cold, nursey. Throw something over me.

ROSALIE [*having scrutinized her*]. I'm going to put you to bed; that'll be much better.

BLANCHE. No.

ROSALIE. Do as I tell you, if you don't want to be sick.

BLANCHE. Oh, yes; I am going to be sick.

ROSALIE. Come, Rosalie is going to undress you. It won 't be the first time.

BLANCHE. Call mama.

ROSALIE. You don't need your mother; I'm here.

BLANCHE. I'm not going to be married, Rosalie.

ROSALIE. Well, it's an ill wind that blows no good! We've spoiled you; but not enough to make you prefer that she-devil and her monkey. That's what they are. That marriage, I tell you, wasn't the right kind for you. If they had listened to your father and me, it wouldn't have been considered a minute.

BLANCHE [*out of her head*]. My father! I see my father now! He's reaching out his arms to me and beckoning me to come with him.

ROSALIE. Come and lie down, Blanchy.

BLANCHE. Your Blanchy is a fallen woman! You didn't know it. I'm a fallen woman!

ROSALIE. Don't talk that way, dearie; it isn't nice. Come, come with your old nursey.

BLANCHE. Oh, I can't bear it! [*She cries out*] Marie! Marie! Marie! [*She grows weak in* ROSALIE'S *arms and slips little by little to the floor*]

MARIE [*entering and throwing herself down by her sister*]. Blanche! Blanche!

ROSALIE. Keep still, girlie; it's no use, she can't hear. Take her up gently, poor lamb, and we'll put her to bed.

BLANCHE [*murmuring*]. Fallen woman!

MRS. VIGNERON [*appearing*]. What's the matter? [*She throws herself down by* BLANCHE]

ROSALIE. Come away from her, ma'am; you'll bother us more than you'll help. [JUDITH *appears*]

MRS. VIGNERON. Judith, come here. [*They walk aside together*] You were right, Judith. We've got nothing in the world. They're putting your sister to bed; to-morrow it will be your turn, and the next day mine. You still think the best way is to settle everything?

JUDITH. Yes; I still think so.

MRS. VIGNERON. Good. Take Rosalie with you and go to see Mr. Bourdon. Tell him I accept everything, approve everything, and all I want now is to have it over with. You can add that we are just as much in a hurry as he is. That's your idea, too?

JUDITH. That's my idea.

MRS. VIGNERON. Go ahead then. [*They separate*] I should like to keep what belongs to me; but the first thing is to save my children.

ACT IV

A cheaply furnished dining-room, with a shabby-genteel look. Here and there a few chairs; in one place everything is reminiscent of the furniture of the previous acts, and plainly not fitting these new surroundings. There are two single doors, one at the left and the other at the back. At the rear, to the right, a mahogany table covered with red oilcloth stands against the wall; on this table appears a loaf of bread; also cups and other dishes.

ROSALIE. Come in, Mr. Merckens. They'll be glad to see somebody they know.

MERCKENS [*having looked about him*]. Well, well! The lawyer wasn't lying to me. This is poverty, sure enough!

ROSALIE. You're looking at our new home? Yes, it is n't very much! Oh, Lord; yesterday and to-day are two different things.

MERCKENS. What's happened to the family?

ROSALIE. Ruined, Mr. Merckens. My poor missus and the girls have lost everything. I'm not saying how it happened, but I've got my opinion, and I'll keep it, too. You see, when business men get into a house where a person has just died, you may as well say: "Here come the vultures." They don't leave anything they can carry away.

MERCKENS. It isn't a pleasant place any more, eh, Rosalie?

ROSALIE. Not for anybody, Mr. Merckens, not for anybody.

MERCKENS. Why don't you find another place?

ROSALIE. How can the girls get along without me, any more than I can without them? I'm one more mouth to be fed, true enough; but you bet I earn what I eat. You mustn't think you can stay to luncheon with us, Mr. Merckens. In the old days, when I saw you coming at this hour, I didn't need any orders to know what to do; you'd find your place ready at the table; but things are different now. I'll go and tell Mrs. Vigneron you are here.

MERCKENS. No; don't bother Mrs. Vigneron. Just tell Miss Judith I am here.

[JUDITH *enters*]

ROSALIE. Here she is now.

JUDITH. How do you do, Mr. Merckens. [MERCKENS *bows*]

ROSALIE. But of course, if a good cup of coffee will do you, we can still offer you that.

JUDITH. Leave us, Rosalie — [ROSALIE *goes out*]

JUDITH [*to* MERCKENS]. First of all, I've a little bone to pick with you, and then that'll be out of the way. I wrote to you twice asking you to come and see me. Once ought to be enough.

MERCKENS [*awkwardly*]. Are you sure you wrote me twice?

JUDITH. You know well I did.

MERCKENS. No, really; your first letter didn't reach me.

JUDITH. Well, never mind. I don't need to tell you the conditions we are reduced to; you saw the moment you came in.

MERCKENS [*half serious, half joking*]. Tell me about it.

JUDITH. It's a story you wouldn't be interested in, and it wouldn't be pleasant for me to tell. In a word, we didn't have money enough to fight for our rights; we had to have a hundred thousand francs in cash.

MERCKENS. Why didn't you tell me? I would have found the money.

JUDITH. It's too late now. Please sit down. Mr. Merckens, you have seen, and you remember, our family life. We were very happy; very fond of one another; we knew very few people outside, and cared to know none. We didn't think that some day we should have need of acquaintances, and that then we shouldn't have any. [MERCKENS *looks at his watch*] Are you in a hurry?

MERCKENS. Yes; I am. Will you please cut the story short? You wanted to see me; here I am. You want to ask me something. What is it? Perhaps it would be just as well for me to tell you that I am not a very obliging person.

JUDITH. Shall I go on?

MERCKENS. Yes, certainly; go ahead.

JUDITH. Here is what I first thought of; I'll start with the simplest and surest thing. I am thinking of turning to account the fine lessons you have given me, by giving lessons myself.

MERCKENS [*touching her knee*]. What, poor child — you've got down to that?

JUDITH. Come, come, Mr. Merckens; please call me "Miss," as you have been used to do, and answer me seriously.

MERCKENS. Lessons! In the first place, are you capable of giving lessons? I'm not so sure of it. But let's suppose you are. Would you do what is necessary to get pupils? To get them, you have to play the part of a beggar. You don't get any by being dignified and putting on airs. But it is possible that people might take pity on you, and in four or five years — not before — you might have enough pupils. Your pupils would as often as not be disagreeable; their parents would nearly always be brutes. What is a poor little music teacher to a lot of philistines that don't even know what C major is? You needn't look any farther, for instance, than your dad . . .

JUDITH. We won't speak of my father.

MERCKENS. Surely a fellow can laugh a little — he didn't leave you anything. [*A pause*]

JUDITH. Let's put aside the question of music lessons a minute; we can come

back to that. Now in what I am going to say to you, Mr. Merckens, please don't think I am prompted by vanity or presumption; I am just trying to make use of what talent I have for music. I have composed a good deal; you know that. With the little things I've already written, and others I can produce, can't I get a living for my family?

MERCKENS [*after laughing*]. Look at me. [*He laughs again*] Never, never say that again; understand? I mean what you have just said to me. You'd be the laughing-stock of the whole world. [*He laughs again*] Earn a living! Is that all?

JUDITH. No, it isn't. We were talking once about a profession that didn't strike me favorably then, and still doesn't more than half appeal to me. But the way my family is fixed, I ought not to hesitate at anything to help them out. The stage?

MERCKENS. Too late.

JUDITH. Why can't I do as others have — women who felt undecided at first, but summoned up their courage and went into it?

MERCKENS. Too late.

JUDITH. Perhaps I have natural qualities—and lack only work and experience?

MERCKENS. Too late. It's no use thinking of the stage without preparing for it a long time. You'll never be an artist. It isn't in you. As you are now, all you'd find on the stage would be disillusionment . . . or adventures; and that isn't what you are after, is it?

JUDITH. But what can I do, then?

MERCKENS. Nothing. I see the fix you are in. You're not the first one I've seen in the same situation, and made the same reply to. There are no resources for a woman; or, at least, only one. Now I'll tell you the whole truth in one sentence. If you are good, people will respect you without doing anything for you; and if you're not, they'll do things for you without respecting you. There's no other way about it. Are you going to take up the subject of giving lessons again?

JUDITH. It's no use. I'm sorry to have bothered you.

MERCKENS. You want me to go?

JUDITH. I sha'n't stop you.

MERCKENS. Good-by, Miss Judith.

JUDITH. Good-by, Mr. Merckens.

MERCKENS [*at the door*]. There was nothing else to tell her.

MARIE [*entering*]. Well?

JUDITH. Well, if Mr. Merckens is right, and if things are as he says, we aren't out of our difficulties yet. Meanwhile, here are all my plans upset; those you know of, and another one I had kept to myself.

MARIE. What other?

JUDITH. What's the use telling you?

MARIE. Tell me, anyway.

JUDITH. I did think, for a while, of making use of my voice, by going on the stage.

MARIE. You, sister, on the stage!

JUDITH. Well, why not? We must be doing something, and we've got to take what comes. We can't wait till we have got down to our last cent. Mama isn't able to go to work, and furthermore we don't want her to. Who knows whether poor Blanche will ever recover her reason? Well, then, there's just you and me; and what is there you can do, dearie? You would have to work twelve hours a day to earn a franc and a half.

MARIE. Tell me, really and truly, what you think of Blanche's condition? How do you find her?

JUDITH. One day better and the next day worse. We expect her to recognize us any moment; but as yet she doesn't seem to see anyone or hear anything. I've been thinking over this misfortune; and perhaps we have escaped a worse one. If Blanche, in that condition, had heard of the marriage of Mr. de Saint-Genis, might it not have killed her? She is alive. That's the main thing. We have her still with us. If we must always take care of her, we will. If we must go hungry for her, we'll do that, too. She isn't our sister now — she's our little girl.

MARIE. How good you are, sister; I love you so much! [*They embrace*]

JUDITH. I love you, too. At times I am blunt; but I always have you here, in my heart. It seems to me that I, the eldest sister — "big sister," as you call me — I am the one who should find a way out of our troubles. I don't know how to do it. I've looked, and I can't find a way. If the only thing needed were to go through fire and water for the rest of you, I should have done that before now. [*A pause*]

MARIE. Has mama said anything about a visit from Mr. Bourdon?

JUDITH. No. What was he doing here?

MARIE. Mr. Teissier sent him to ask me to be his wife.

JUDITH. I'm not surprised. It was easy enough to see that Mr. Teissier took a liking to you, and sooner or later the idea of marriage was bound to come to him.

MARIE. Would you advise me to accept him?

JUDITH. You mustn't ask my advice on that point. You are the one concerned; it is for you to decide. Think it over well, look at it from all sides, but by all means think only of yourself. If you are frightened at our situation, and you look back regretfully to the times when we had plenty of money, marry Mr. Teissier. He will make you pay dearly enough for your comfort and security. But if I understand you, and the way you love your mother and sisters, and how you could do for them what would be repulsive if you alone were concerned, we should be very wrong — all the guiltier — to advise you to make the greatest sacrifice a woman can make.

MARIE. What you say is right from the heart; kiss me again.

[ROSALIE *enters at the rear; in one hand she carries a coffee-pot, in the other a casserole full of milk; she places them on the table, and then draws near the two sisters and watches them, sighing;* MARIE *and* JUDITH *separate*]

JUDITH. Is luncheon ready?

ROSALIE. Yes, miss. I'll serve it whenever you wish.

MARIE. Judith is going to help you with the table, Rosalie. [JUDITH *and* ROSALIE *carry the table to the front of the stage, placing it at the right;* ROSALIE *arranges the cups and serves the coffee while* JUDITH *places the chairs.* MARIE, *meanwhile, goes to the door at the left and opens it.* BLANCHE *comes in, followed by her mother.* BLANCHE *is pale, limp, and stares stupidly, her attitude being that of a harmless insane person.* MRS. VIGNERON *is aged and whitened.* MARIE *helps* BLANCHE *to a place, and then they sit down one by one, except* ROSALIE, *who takes her coffee standing. There is a prolonged silence, and an atmosphere of utter desolation*]

MRS. VIGNERON [*suddenly bursting out*]. Oh, children; if your father could see us! [*Tears and sobbing*]

[*At that moment* BOURDON *steps quietly into the room*]

ROSALIE [*to* BOURDON]. How did you get in?

BOURDON. By the open door. You ought not leave your outside door open. Thieves could steal everything you've got.

ROSALIE [*speaking directly at him*]. No fear of that. That job has been done — and done brown.

BOURDON [*to* MRS. VIGNERON, *who has risen*]. Don't let me disturb you, madam; I'll wait until you have finished luncheon.

MRS. VIGNERON [*going to him*]. What have you got to say to me, Mr. Bourdon?

BOURDON [*in a low tone*]. This time, madam, I've come for Teissier, regarding a matter very dear to him. I assume you have let your daughter know about the offer I spoke about?

MRS. VIGNERON. Certainly.

BOURDON. Do I have your permission to renew the offer to her, in your presence?

MRS. VIGNERON. Very well, you have my consent. Judith, dear, take your sister away. Marie, Mr. Bourdon wishes to speak with us.

[JUDITH *leads* BLANCHE *out*]

BOURDON [*to* MARIE]. Your mother has told you, young lady, of the desire expressed by Mr. Teissier?

MARIE. Yes, sir.

BOURDON. Of your own free will you have declined this proposal of marriage?

MARIE. Of my own free will.

BOURDON. Good! Good! I'm glad it's that way. For a moment, I was afraid, when you refused such a handsome offer, that your mother and sisters had conspired to keep you with them — not out of jealousy, but in a spirit of misdirected affection. If you have come to a definite, unalterable decision, of your own accord, I don't see any use in going further into the matter. [*A silence*]

MRS. VIGNERON. Don't be afraid, dear; answer frankly just what you think. [*Another silence*]

BOURDON. In case you regret your first decision, young lady — and that's easy to explain — I am offering you a chance to change your mind. You had better take advantage of it.

MARIE. You must tell Mr. Teissier for me that I like him better for his per-

sistence, but that I still wish some time to think it over.

BOURDON. Well! That's a reasonable answer, madam — very sensible, indeed. — That doesn't look like the categorical refusal you gave me.

MRS. VIGNERON. My daughter may have changed her mind. But she should know that I don't approve of it.

BOURDON. Say no more, madam. Leave the young lady to her own devices. Later on she might reproach you because she followed your wishes. [*Returning to* MARIE] I understand perfectly, young lady, why this marriage must present some objectionable features to you, and why you have been in no hurry to enter it. Unfortunately, Teissier is not twenty years old, like yourself — indeed, that is your greatest cause for complaint — and at his age, a man isn't willing to have things delayed.

MARIE. Mr. Bourdon, I want to know, and I beg you will tell me sincerely, whether Mr. Teissier is an honest man.

BOURDON. An honest man! What do you mean by that? In case you should marry Mr. Teissier, I should not advise you to place implicit confidence in a simple promise; but there are lawyers to draw up contracts establishing the rights of the parties concerned. Have I answered your question?

MARIE. No; you didn't understand me. When a young woman says "an honest man," she thinks of a good many things.

BOURDON. Do you want to know whether Teissier has made his money in an honorable way?

MARIE. Yes; I want to be assured on that point, as well as some others.

BOURDON. Why should that worry you? If you were to look into all the fortunes in France, there aren't a hundred — no, not fifty — that would stand a close examination. I speak as a man who has been through the mill. Teissier has been in business all his life; he has amassed a considerable sum, and nobody would dream of attacking his right to it. That's all you need to know.

MARIE. What is Mr. Teissier's ordinary conduct? What are his tastes and his habits?

BOURDON. Just the tastes and habits of any man of his age. I don't think you have anything to fear on that score. I see now what you are driving at. Believe me, as a husband Teissier will have rather too much than too little virtue. I leave it to your mother.

MRS. VIGNERON. It occurs to me to ask what interest you have in this marriage, Mr. Bourdon?

BOURDON. What interest, madam? Only the welfare of this young lady, and yours, at the same time.

MRS. VIGNERON. It's rather late, isn't it, to show such devotion for us?

BOURDON. Madam, you are still thinking of that wretched business. I know everything went about as badly as it could. But was it my fault that you were unable to fight for your husband's estate? You had to give way to the law of the strongest, that's all. Today, this law has shifted in your favor. It happens that your daughter has made a conquest of an old man, who will grant anything to be able to spend his remaining days with her. The whole situation favors you. You've got the trumps. Play 'em. Do I need to tell you, madam, that we lawyers know neither the weak nor the strong; that absolute impartiality is a duty we never depart from? Nevertheless, I don't think I do wrong, even though I am Teissier's attorney, to stipulate for your daughter all the advantages she is in a position to demand. [*Returning to* MARIE] You heard what I have just said to your mother, miss. Put whatever questions you wish to me; but particularly the question which is really the most important — the question of money. I'm listening.

MARIE. No; you speak.

BOURDON [*with a half-smile*]. I'm here to listen to you, and advise you.

MARIE. It would be painful for me to talk about it.

BOURDON [*smiling*]. Nonsense! What you want to know is what Mr. Teissier is worth, down to a cent, isn't it?

MARIE. It's enough, I know, without being told.

BOURDON. Right you are. Teissier is rich, very rich. Why, he's richer, the old fox, than he himself knows. Come, now, miss, I'm waiting for you.

MARIE. Of course Mr. Teissier has told you of his intentions?

BOURDON. Yes; but I must know yours, too. It's always fun for us lawyers to see the parties fighting tooth and nail over the terms.

MARIE. Please don't add to my embarrassment. If this marriage must

take place, I had rather run my chances than make the conditions.

BOURDON [*smiling continually*]. Really! [MARIE *looks at him fixedly*] I don't doubt your scruples, miss. When they are so plainly shown, we are forced to believe them sincere. But Teissier doesn't think you are marrying him for his beauty. So he is already willing to make a settlement on you. But this settlement, I hasten to tell you, is not sufficient. You are making a bargain, are you not? Or, if that word hurts you, at any rate a speculation. And you ought to reap all the benefits of it. So it is only just — and you can insist — that when Teissier marries you, he shall make you half-owner of all he possesses, irrevocably and incontestably, so that you will receive one-half after he dies. Then all you would have to do would be to pray that time would not be too long deferred. [*Turning to* MRS. VIGNERON] You heard what I have just told your daughter, madam?

MRS. VIGNERON. I heard.

BOURDON. What do you think?

MRS. VIGNERON. If you want to know, Mr. Bourdon, I think instead of promising my daughter half Mr. Teissier's fortune, you would have done better to have saved for her that of her father's.

BOURDON. Can't get away from that subject, eh, madam? [*Returning to* MARIE] Well, miss, now you know the great advantages in store for you in the near future. I am wondering what objections you can find now. I can't think of any. Sentimental objections? I am speaking, I think, to a sensible young woman, well brought up, without foolish notions. You ought to know there is no such thing as love. I never met with it. This world is made up of businesses. Marriage is a business, just like the rest, and the chances offered you to-day will never come your way again.

MARIE. In the conversations you have had with Mr. Teissier, has he said anything about my family?

BOURDON. About your family? No. [*In a low tone*] Do they want something, too?

MARIE. Mr. Teissier ought to know that I would never consent to separate from them.

BOURDON. Why should you? Your sisters are nice girls, and your mother is very agreeable. Besides, Teissier has every reason not to want to leave a young wife with idle moments on her hands. Now, miss, be ready for what remains for me to tell you. Teissier came here with me. He is outside. He is waiting for a reply, and this time it must be a definite answer. You will take long chances in doing otherwise. So it is a "yes" or "no" that I am asking for.

MRS. VIGNERON. That's enough of that, Mr. Bourdon. I was willing enough for you to tell my daughter whatever propositions were made to her. Whether she accepts them or not, is her business. But I don't intend that she shall be surprised into acceptance, or do anything in a moment of weakness or emotion. Moreover, you must know that I reserve the right to have a talk with her and tell her certain things which would be out of place with you here — things a mother can tell her child, and must tell, when they are alone. One thing I can tell you: I haven't brought up a girl to be twenty — a girl full of health and fine spirit — only to hand her over to an old man.

BOURDON. To whom are you going to give her? To hear you talk, madam, anyone might think you had your pockets full of sons-in-law, and that your daughters' only trouble was to choose between them. Why was it that the marriage of one of them — a marriage that seemed practically settled — fell through? Lack of money. And lack of money, madam, is just what will keep every one of your daughters an old maid.

MRS. VIGNERON. You're wrong. I had nothing, and neither did my husband. He married me all the same, and we have been very happy.

BOURDON. It is true you have had four children. But if your husband were still in this world, madam, he would disagree with you — perhaps for the first time. When he saw the situation of his daughters, he would be frightened — for, whatever you may think of it, it is perplexing and dangerous. He would put a true value on Mr. Teissier's proposal. To be sure, it is not perfect; but it is more than acceptable. It is reassuring for the present and [*looking at* MARIE] full of dazzling prospects for the future. I know well enough that it's easy to say what dead people might or mightn't do, but this young lady's father, whose

heart was just as big as yours, had all the experience that you lack. He knew life. He knew that you pay for what you get in this world. And, in the end, his thoughts to-day would be something like this: "I have lived for my family; I died for them; surely my daughter can sacrifice a few years for them."

MARIE [*with her eyes full of tears*]. Tell Mr. Teissier I accept.

BOURDON. Come now, young lady, you're giving yourself a good deal of trouble over making your fortune. Here is your contract. I drew it up in advance, without knowing whether I should be paid for my trouble. Read it over carefully and soberly. All it needs is Teissier's signature; and I'll attend to that. I was your father's lawyer, and I'm hoping to be yours. I'll go find Teissier and bring him here. [*He goes out*]

MARIE [*to her mother*]. Kiss me — but don't say anything. Don't take away my courage. I've no more than I need, as it is. You must see that Mr. Bourdon is right. This marriage is our salvation. I'm ashamed — oh, so ashamed! — to do it; but I should always feel guilty if I did not. Mother dear, could you, at your age, begin to live another life of misery and privation? Yes, yes, I know — you are full of courage! But Blanche — Blanche, the poor child — we can't ask her to have courage — not her. What remorse I should have to suffer later, if her health were to demand care that we couldn't give her! And Judith! Oh, I'm thinking of Judith, too. Who knows what would become of a young girl, the best, the highest-minded girl in the world, if she should be driven to extremes, and should lose her fear — of things. Come, I feel a weight off my shoulders now that it's done. It will be just as he wishes — a dishonest, self-seeking marriage — and a sad one, too. But still I prefer a little shame and regret that I know about to a host of terrors of all kinds that might end in a terrible misfortune. Don't cry any more; don't let them see that you have been crying.

[BOURDON *comes in, followed by* TEISSIER. TEISSIER, *smiling, goes toward* MARIE; *but* BOURDON *stops him and motions that he must first speak to* MRS. VIGNERON]

TEISSIER. How do you do, madam. [*Going to* MARIE] Is it really true, what Bourdon just told me — that you will be my wife?

MARIE. It is true.

TEISSIER. A mighty good decision — you won't change your mind by to-morrow, will you? [*She offers him her hand; he kisses her on both cheeks*] Don't blush. That's the way we do in the village I came from. A man kisses his bride-to-be first on the right cheek, saying, "Here's one for the Mayor"; and then one on the left cheek, saying, "Here's one for the priest." [MARIE *smiles;* TEISSIER *goes over to* MRS. VIGNERON] If you are willing, madam, we'll publish the banns to-morrow. Bourdon will make us a little contract — won't you, Bourdon? [BOURDON *replies with a significant gesture*] And three weeks from now your second daughter will be Mrs. Teissier.

[ROSALIE *enters*]

MRS. VIGNERON. What is it, Rosalie?

ROSALIE. Will you see Mr. Dupuis, ma'am?

MRS. VIGNERON. Mr. Dupuis? The house-furnisher?

ROSALIE. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. VIGNERON. What does he want of us?

ROSALIE. You owe him money, ma'am. At least, he says so. Another vulture, sure as you live!

MRS. VIGNERON. We owe Mr. Dupuis nothing — do you hear? — nothing! Tell him I don't want to see him.

TEISSIER. Yes, madam, yes; you must see Mr. Dupuis. Either there is really something due him, in spite of what you think, or Mr. Dupuis is mistaken, in which case it won't be out of place to show him his error. You are not alone; you have a man with you now. Show Mr. Dupuis in. Miss Marie is going to receive him. She will soon be mistress of a house, and I want to see how she will act. Come, Bourdon. Let's leave your daughter with Mr. Dupuis.

[MRS. VIGNERON *and* BOURDON *go out at the left*]

TEISSIER [*to* MARIE]. I'll be here, behind this door; I won't miss a word. [*He hides behind the door*]

DUPUIS [*entering*]. How do you do, Miss Marie.

MARIE. How do you do, Mr. Dupuis.

DUPUIS. Is your mother well?

MARIE. Pretty well, thank you.

DUPUIS. Your sisters are well?

MARIE. Yes.

DUPUIS. I don't need to ask how you are; you're as fresh and rosy as a new-born babe.

MARIE. My mother told me to receive you for her, Mr. Dupuis. Tell me as soon as possible what brings you here.

DUPUIS. Can't you make a little guess as to what brings me here?

MARIE. No, really.

DUPUIS. Is that so? Don't you say to yourself, that if I come here, after so long a time has passed, it must be that I need money?

MARIE. Explain yourself.

DUPUIS. I would have given a whole lot — yes, I would, young lady — not to have to make this visit. When I heard of your father's death, I said to my wife: "I believe Mr. Vigneron still owes us something — but what of it? — it isn't much, and we won't die if we set it down to profit and loss." That's the way I do with my good customers. Mr. Vigneron was a good customer; never had the least trouble with him; that's the way things ought to be between honest folks. Unfortunately, you know how business is — up one day and down the next; well, it isn't good just now. Understand?

MARIE. I'm pretty certain, Mr. Dupuis, that my father settled everything with you.

DUPUIS. Don't say that — you hurt me.

MARIE. Nevertheless, I'm as sure as anyone can be that my father squared his account with you.

DUPUIS. Be careful; you'll get me angry. It's only a matter of two thousand francs. The amount isn't worth the trouble. Perhaps you are embarrassed at this moment. Then say so. I haven't come to take your last cent. Just let your mother give me a note for two thousand francs, at three months. Her signature is the same as ready money to me.

MARIE. I'll tell my mother you are here to collect two thousand francs. But I tell you again you are mistaken. I'm certain we don't owe it.

DUPUIS. Well, young lady, I don't leave here till I get it. I came politely, with my hat in my hand [*he puts it on*] and you seem to be treating me like a robber. Those ways don't go with me. You'd better find your mother and make her give me two thousand francs — or a note — I'm still willing to take her note — or Mr. Dupuis will have a fit of anger that will shake the house.

[TEISSIER *enters;* DUPUIS, *surprised and quickly intimidated by his appearance, takes off his hat again*]

TEISSIER. Keep your hat on. There's no ceremony in business. You've got your bill with you?

DUPUIS. Certainly, sir, I have my bill.

TEISSIER. Let's have it.

DUPUIS. Shall I give my bill to this gentleman, miss?

MARIE. Do as he says.

TEISSIER [*reading the bill*]. "Received of Mrs. Vigneron, two thousand francs to settle her account in full." What kind of a bill is this? Don't you usually give an itemized account?

DUPUIS. We can't make out the same bill five or six times, sir. The first one I rendered to Mr. Vigneron contained all the necessary specifications.

TEISSIER. All right. I'm going to pay you. I'll verify the bill when I get home.

DUPUIS. Go ahead, sir, and verify it. Mr. Vigneron should have left his papers in order.

TEISSIER. Yes, he did. [*Holding the bill close to his eyes*] Dupuis is the name, eh? Is this signature yours? You are Mr. Dupuis?

DUPUIS. Yes, sir.

TEISSIER. I am going to give you your two thousand francs.

DUPUIS. Verify it, sir, if you can. I'll wait till then.

TEISSIER. You're very sure that when Mr. Vigneron died, he still owed you two thousand francs?

DUPUIS. Yes, sir — yes, sir. My wife may have made a mistake in her figures; but I don't think so.

TEISSIER. Your wife has nothing to do with it. It's you who would be liable if you received the same amount twice.

DUPUIS. I don't demand it, sir, if it isn't due me. I am an honest man.

TEISSIER [*offering him the money*]. Here's your two thousand francs.

DUPUIS. No; verify it first. I'd rather you would.

TEISSIER. Get out of here! And don't let me see you inside these doors again. Do you hear?

DUPUIS. What's that, sir?

TEISSIER. I tell you not to come

back here. Don't be fresh, or you'll regret it.

DUPUIS. Give me back my bill, anyway.

TEISSIER. Look out, or you'll see it again in a courtroom.

DUPUIS. Now that's too much! How dare you — I don't even know who you are — how dare you talk to me like that! I'm going, miss; but you'll hear from me again — and soon! [*He puts on his hat and goes out*]

TEISSIER. Child, since your father died you've been surrounded by a lot of scoundrels. . . . Let's go and join your family.

THE END

LOVERS

(*AMANTS*)

(*1895*)

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS

By MAURICE DONNAY

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
BARRETT H. CLARK

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

Vétheuil
Ruyseux
De Sambré
Prunier
Ravier
Schlinder
Gauderic
Prosper
A Servant
Claudine Rozay
Henriette Jamine
Suzanne Grégeois
Adèle Sorbier
Fräulein
English Governess
Denise Rozay

Copyright, 1915,
By LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

LOVERS

ACT I

The drawing-room in CLAUDINE ROZAY'S *apartment, Place des États-Unis. At the back is a large bay window through which are seen the tall chestnut trees of the square. A Punch-and-Judy show has been set up between two doors. Down-stage sit half a dozen little girls and boys, very stylishly dressed in noticeably English clothes; behind them are their respective governesses, English and German, and then their mothers, elegantly attired young women. As the curtain rises, the play of Punch-and-Judy is drawing to a close. Little Punch is beating the policeman; then Judy, sumptuously dressed in yellow and blue, announces the end of the comedy. The audience rise, disperse, then form into groups.*

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Charming! Delightful! I must confess I enjoyed it quite as much as the children!

MADAME SORBIER. I laughed because they did. [GEORGES *and* GASTON SORBIER, *unbearable little rascals in sailor suits, jostle each other and quarrel*] Georges! Gaston! Stop it! Those children are simply frightful! Fräulein, you must not leave them for a single instant — see what happens! You need have no fear of being too severe with them.

FRÄULEIN. But Madame, if they refuse to listen to me — ? M. Gaston called me a fool just now.

MADAME SORBIER. Never mind that. Now, it's about time we were going. But you, Gaston, are to copy the sentence, "I must not call Fräulein a fool," one hundred times. That will teach you a lesson! Put on your hats now.

[MADAME SORBIER *disappears into the background, together with* FRÄULEIN, GEORGES *and* GASTON]

CLAUDINE. Ladies, I should like to introduce to you M. Ernest Ravier, the author of the play you have just seen.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. So you are the clever manipulator of these little puppets?

RAVIER. Yes, Madame, I am.

MADAME JAMINE. Real talent!

CLAUDINE. M. Ravier's father is opposed to his son's pursuing a theatrical career.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Artistic murder, I call it!

MADAME JAMINE. I am sure you would write lovely plays for the Français!

RAVIER [*modestly*]. That is not quite the same as writing for Punch-and-Judy.

MADAME JAMINE. Oh, when Scapin beats the man in the sack — !

SCHLINDER. There is not so much difference after all — amusing children and grown-ups. Men are only overgrown children.

MADAME JAMINE. For whose benefit did you make that remark?

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. But, Monsieur, for my part I was vastly amused. Why, every stroke that was showered on the policeman's back convulsed me.

SCHLINDER. Very amusing, is it not, Madame? You like to see authority get the worst of it?

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. It is always quite irresistible.

SCHLINDER. Hm! [*He joins* MME. SORBIER]

MADAME JAMINE. You *did* put your foot in it, my dear! Do you know who that gentleman is?

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. No.

MADAME JAMINE. Schlinder, the Chief of Police.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Heavens! And

I told him I liked to see authority get the worst of it!

RAVIER. That needn't trouble you, Madame; Schlinder is not the least bit sensitive. He is most accommodating, too; for instance, if you wish to get special permission to do anything, if you want information about a cook, or wish to meet the Grand Dukes, you may safely confide in him.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. I'm very glad to know it — I must ask a favor of him.

MADAME JAMINE. So must I.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. How does he happen to be here at Claudine's?

MADAME JAMINE. He's very much in love with Mme. Sorbier.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Ah, I see.

RAVIER. She would neglect her duties and home to keep in his good graces.

MADAME JAMINE. Tell me, now — what is this Grand Dukes' business you spoke of?

RAVIER. Don't you know? I'll tell you: when the Grand Dukes of Russia come to Paris —

MADAME SORBIER [*going to* CLAUDINE]. Dear Madame, many, many thanks for the charming party you have given my children.

CLAUDINE. But you aren't leaving so soon? The children are going to have some refreshments —

MADAME SORBIER. No, no, dear Madame, Georges and Gaston must have nothing — they've misbehaved. They fought like little urchins, and Gaston was naughty to Fräulein.

CLAUDINE. Very naughty! But let me ask you to forgive them, just this once! They won't be naughty again. You won't — will you? [*The* CHILDREN *shake their heads*]

MADAME SORBIER. Is that the way to answer? You're like the educated donkey — you have tongues, haven't you? Can't you say no?

GEORGES AND GASTON [*sulkily*]. No!

MADAME SORBIER. No — what?

GEORGES AND GASTON. No, Madame.

MADAME SORBIER. Now run off and have some refreshments — but remember, I let you have them only because Mme. Rozay asked me — you may thank her. [FRÄULEIN *tries to induce the* CHILDREN, *in German, to thank* CLAUDINE, *but in vain*]

ENGLISH GOVERNESS [*coming forward with* DENISE]. Madame, everything is ready — shall the children come?

CLAUDINE. Certainly. [*To* DENISE] You, dearest, remember, you're the hostess here — you must do the honors. At the table don't take the kind of cakes *you* like — remember, all your little friends must be served first. Run on, darling. [*She kisses* DENISE *effusively*] I'll come and see you soon.

[DENISE *goes out with her* GOVERNESS, *who showers advice upon her in English. The* CHILDREN *are now eating.* MME. GRÉGEOIS *is talking with* SCHLINDER *in a corner*]

SCHLINDER. I am listening, Madame.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Just think, M. le Préfet, I had to dismiss my maid only a few days ago — she'd been in service eight years — diligent and very good at her work, only she seemed too fond of the second coachman — even went to his room. Did you ever hear of such a thing?

SCHLINDER [*Prefect of Police*]. I have.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. As I had no intention of countenancing such goings-on under my roof, I dismissed them both.

SCHLINDER. You had a perfect right to do so.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. That was about a month ago, but for the past week I have been receiving anonymous letters containing threats — full of vulgar, vile expressions — things I shouldn't think of repeating to you, M. le Préfet — there are even some I don't understand myself!

SCHLINDER. I can well believe that — and then?

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Well, I suspect that these come from the couple in question, the couple I took the liberty of disturbing. Don't you think I'm right?

SCHLINDER. Yes and no.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Oh, Monsieur, if you could only see the letters! Big, scrawling — red ink — disguised — and *such* expressions!

SCHLINDER. That doesn't constitute absolute proof. I have seen letters of that sort which were written by the whitest and most delicate of perfumed hands.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. But, Monsieur, I have no other enemies. Thank God, I live in a circle which is not in the least quarrelsome; we have no adventures or intrigues.

SCHLINDER. That goes without

saying. Well, in that case, then, it is very possible that your suspicion is correct — what are their names, you say? [*He takes out a note-book*]

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. The maid's name is Sidonie Rabut — [*spelling the word*] b-u-t.

SCHLINDER [*writing*]. The man?

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Félix Tirviellot.

SCHLINDER. I shall have Sidonie Rabut and Félix Tirviellot summoned before one of my magistrates, who has charge of such matters. He will frighten them, so that they won't disturb you any more.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Thank you kindly, Monsieur! I hope you will give us the pleasure of calling at our home?

SCHLINDER [*bowing*]. Madame!

[*The* CHILDREN *continue to regale themselves with refreshments*]

MADAME SORBIER. Come quick, Schlinder; the ladies are very excited; they want to ask you a favor.

SCHLINDER. I am quite at their service.

CLAUDINE. We should like to see the parts of the city where the murderers live.

SCHLINDER. We are not acquainted with those districts, Madame.

RAVIER. If you were, you would not be here.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Try to think, M. le Préfet. Just now M. Ravier was telling us of a number of shady places: Père-Lunettes, Château-Rouge, Gravilliers Ball, St. Hubert's Cellars.

RAVIER. The Grand Dukes!

SCHLINDER. Nothing is easier, ladies —

CLAUDINE. Tell me — I'll be rather nervous — there won't be any danger, will there?

SCHLINDER. Not in the least, Madame; you will be as safe as you are in your own homes.

CLAUDINE. You are really too obliging!

SCHLINDER. As a matter of fact, those places are well-known, all classified — show places: why, the Père-Lunettes shop has been turned into an *Artistic Cabaret* —

RAVIER. The poor man's *Chat-Noir*.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. But we'd like to visit it.

SCHLINDER. Nothing is easier. As soon as you decide on a day, you have only to let me know. And now, Madame, you must be good enough to let me go where duty calls.

CLAUDINE. You must be very busy — those two recent murders, one coming right after the other — !

SCHLINDER. Yes, I am due to appear at a garden party at the Minister of Foreign Affairs'.

RAVIER. I'm going there, too; may I accompany you?

SCHLINDER. Delighted.

[RAVIER *and* SCHLINDER *go out*]

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Charming man!

MADAME JAMINE. How interesting! What a lot of stories he must know!

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. There are a lot he doesn't know, too!

FRÄULEIN [*coming down-stage*]. Madame!

MADAME SORBIER. What is it now, Fräulein?

FRÄULEIN. Madame, Georges and Gaston have overeaten. They have heartburn — what shall I do?

MADAME SORBIER. I'll go. Madame, I beg your pardon for having brought my children!

CLAUDINE. They're lovely children.

MADAME SORBIER. Their father spoils them. School begins soon, and then I sha'n't be troubled; I can't decide whether to send them to the *Fathers* in the Rue de Madrid or the Dominicans at Arcueil.

CLAUDINE. Sorry I can't advise you.

[MADAME SORBIER *starts to go, and this gives the signal for departure to the other guests*]

MADAME SORBIER [*as she goes*]. Good-by, dear Madame; once more, I beg your pardon. Thank you for your very kind invitation.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS [*to* CLAUDINE]. I must go, too: you must be worn out.

MADAME JAMINE [*to* CLAUDINE]. Good-bye, dear.

CLAUDINE. Please stay, my dear Henriette, we have so many things to talk over!

[*All but* CLAUDINE *and* HENRIETTE *go out*]

CLAUDINE. Now, how are you, dear? It's good to see you after so long! I didn't even know you were in Paris. I wrote you just on the chance of your being here.

MADAME JAMINE. It was so good of you! As a matter of fact, I haven't been in Paris this winter — we were at Beaulieu: the doctors said that Yvonne had to spend the winter in the Midi. We returned in April.

CLAUDINE. Was your friend Mme.

de Barency at Beaulieu this season? I think she has a villa — ?

MADAME JAMINE. Yes, yes, she was there.

CLAUDINE. Is she as gay and lively as ever?

MADAME JAMINE. Oh, don't talk about it! The poor woman has had a great sorrow — M. Ledouillard left her to get married.

CLAUDINE. No? and they were together so long!

MADAME JAMINE. Eight years.

CLAUDINE. Almost a long lease![1]

MADAME JAMINE. Yes, she is terribly broken up about it, poor dear! She was very fond of Ledouillard, and then — well, she's unclassed now, isn't she? Of course he acted honorably and all that — he left enough to take care of the child.

CLAUDINE. There is a child then? Girl or boy?

MADAME JAMINE. Boy.

CLAUDINE. So much the better — with a boy it's easier. Well, Ledouillard is very generous — I expected him to behave decently.

MADAME JAMINE. Yes, but granted that he left them a capital of five hundred thousand francs, that's not a fortune, especially in these days.

CLAUDINE. No, you can't do much with that — !

MADAME JAMINE. How is M. de Ruyseux?

CLAUDINE. Very well, thank you.

MADAME JAMINE. I expected to see him to-day.

CLAUDINE. He had to attend his committee meeting.

MADAME JAMINE. Always busy with politics?

CLAUDINE. Always. And are you happy, little Henriette?

MADAME JAMINE. Don't you know what's happened to me?

CLAUDINE. No — what?

MADAME JAMINE. I've lost him.

CLAUDINE. Philippe?

MADAME JAMINE. Yes.

CLAUDINE. Lost him? Did he leave you? Married?

MADAME JAMINE. No, lost, lost — he died.

CLAUDINE. You poor dear!

MADAME JAMINE. Hadn't you heard?

CLAUDINE. No — I never hear anything. You see, I live apart from the world here — I see people so seldom! When you came in wearing black, I didn't dare ask —

MADAME JAMINE. Then you didn't get my letter?

CLAUDINE. No, otherwise I should have —

MADAME JAMINE. My dear, dear friend — I was simply crazed, and so lonely! — I must have forgotten to write. Forgive me, will you?

CLAUDINE. But, my dear, I don't blame you in the least. Of course you would have written — I should have been glad — [*stopping short*] I mean, I should have appreciated hearing from you — I should have, that is —

MADAME JAMINE. His death was so — painful — so — There were only a few people asked to the funeral.

CLAUDINE. Really?

MADAME JAMINE. Yes — he committed suicide.

CLAUDINE. No!

SERVANT [*announcing*]. M. Georges Vétheuil.

[*Enter* GEORGES VÉTHEUIL]

CLAUDINE [*rising*]. How are you, Monsieur? Very good of you to come!

VÉTHEUIL. Not at all, Madame. [*To* MME. JAMINE] Madame, I hope you are well?

MADAME JAMINE. Thank you, Monsieur, I am very well.

CLAUDINE. You are acquainted, then? I don't need to introduce you?

VÉTHEUIL. I was afraid of being late, but I see that the play has not yet begun.

CLAUDINE. If you are referring to the Punch-and-Judy, it's over.

VÉTHEUIL. Indeed?

MADAME JAMINE [*laughing*]. Poor Georges, I'm not at all surprised at you.

VÉTHEUIL. In that case I am intruding — I must go.

CLAUDINE [*motioning him to a chair*]. Please don't go!

VÉTHEUIL. But you were talking. When two women get together, there must be something important under discussion —

MADAME JAMINE. It's no mystery; I was just telling Mme. Rozay how Philippe —

VÉTHEUIL. Yes — poor fellow!

[1] French leases are usually made out for terms of three, six, and nine years.

MADAME JAMINE. Well, to conclude: as I was returning to Paris, it happened. As I was saying, we had passed the winter at Beaulieu. Philippe was at Monte Carlo then, the whole time; I couldn't persuade him to keep away. He gambled; and lost, of course; lost heavily. When he came back, he tried to pay his debts out of the receipts of a gold mine in which he was interested — he invested his last sou in it. He acted on bad advice, and one morning he woke up to find himself quite ruined. He then shot himself — twice — in the head.

CLAUDINE. Terrible! I pity you from the bottom of my heart. [MADAME JAMINE *discreetly wipes her eyes with her handkerchief*]

MADAME JAMINE. You can imagine how terribly I felt — especially as toward the last he gambled with my money — that was one of the principal reasons why he killed himself. And now, I — I haven't a sou.

CLAUDINE. Was he the father of your little daughter?

MADAME JAMINE. No, Yvonne's father was —

CLAUDINE. Yes, I forgot — I beg your pardon. Then what happened?

MADAME JAMINE. I was simply overcome; I wept my eyes out for him — I adored him. For two months I couldn't bear the sight of a human being; then, little by little, I braced up — now, now I'm living with Prunier.

CLAUDINE. The cement manufacturer?

MADAME JAMINE. Yes.

CLAUDINE. There are two: Ernest and Jules.

MADAME JAMINE. Mine is Ernest —

CLAUDINE. Who just lost his wife.

MADAME JAMINE. Yes.

CLAUDINE. But I understood that he was heart-broken?

MADAME JAMINE. Yes, it was painful to see him — I met him first at the cemetery.

CLAUDINE. At the cemetery!

VÉTHEUIL. Tell us about it.

MADAME JAMINE. It's very simple. I used to go every week to put flowers on Philippe's grave, and one day I saw Prunier, who was bringing flowers for his wife's grave. — You see, the Pruniers' family vault is near Philippe's. I came back the next day and —

VÉTHEUIL. You said just now you used to go every *week?*

MADAME JAMINE [*ignoring the question*]. Yes, but the guardian told me Prunier came every day. So I came back the day after, and little by little we got to talking; he told me I was like his wife — that was our point of departure. Then he saw I understood him — I used to console him — that's how —

[CLAUDINE *turns away to keep from laughing*]

VÉTHEUIL. Nice!

MADAME JAMINE. Why are you laughing? Is what I say amusing?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, very!

MADAME JAMINE. Well, you see, I must look after things: I have a daughter to educate, and she must have a dowry, for I want her to be able to choose her own husband — a fine, worthy man.

CLAUDINE. And she's right!

VÉTHEUIL. You have plenty of time to decide.

MADAME JAMINE. One can never be too early in those matters! I may die. I don't want her to risk marrying a nobody, who will make her life miserable. I'll keep watch over Yvonne, and if my son-in-law deceives her, I'll — I'll shoot him — I will! [*She rises*]

VÉTHEUIL [*also rising*]. Well, well! And what if she should deceive him?

MADAME JAMINE. That's different — I'll help her. Well, I must be going. Good-by, Mr. Mocker!

VÉTHEUIL. I wasn't mocking!

MADAME JAMINE. Where is my little girl?

CLAUDINE [*escorting* MME. JAMINE *toward the right*]. This way, please. She must be playing with Denise. You'll find her in there.

[*They go out.* VÉTHEUIL, *left alone, examines a large portrait of* CLAUDINE, *which is on an easel. A moment later,* CLAUDINE *re-enters*]

CLAUDINE. You knew Henriette Jamine before, then?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, I've met her a number of times.

CLAUDINE. She's nice, and so pretty! I don't know a prettier woman. I'm sorry I don't see more of her — she's so amusing, too! Don't you think so?

VÉTHEUIL. Oh, yes — she said some very apt things just now.

CLAUDINE. She has the knack of being able to say everything she thinks; she's occasionally ridiculous, but always charming.

VÉTHEUIL. She throws a veil of charm over the most vulgar things.

CLAUDINE. Precisely.

VÉTHEUIL [*pointing to the portrait*]. Is this you?

CLAUDINE. Yes — in the *Age of Reason.* [VÉTHEUIL *rises and looks at the picture*]

VÉTHEUIL. Very good. Who did it?

CLAUDINE. Sargent.

VÉTHEUIL. Remarkable. Decidedly pretty, that *Age of Reason;* what a delightful souvenir it will be! What a pity you left the stage so soon! In the very flush of youth, at the height of success! Why did you?

CLAUDINE. Because at the time I came to know the Count de Ruyseux, who did not like to have me in those surroundings — then I had a daughter. From that time on, I had another part to play, the most wonderful part that was ever written, one I never get tired of at the hundredth or even the thousandth performance — it changes from day to day, yet it always remains the same.

VÉTHEUIL. Then you leave no regrets in the theater?

CLAUDINE. Not a single one.

VÉTHEUIL. But the adulation of the crowd, that dazzlingly brilliant celebrity to which our very best authors continually refer — what of that?

CLAUDINE. Oh, there were moments — ! But if you knew the price we have to pay for them! It's not a happy profession. When I consider that I, the most headstrong, distant, hard-to-get-along-with, lazy, pleasure-loving of mortals rose early every morning, ate a snatch of breakfast and ran in order to be on time for rehearsals; that I passed whole afternoons waiting about; that I went over scenes twenty times according to the caprice of manager or author — when I consider all that, I am astonished at myself, and wonder how I could possibly have endured it all!

VÉTHEUIL. Which is tantamount to saying that if a lover had been one-fourth as exacting, you would have sent him about his business.

CLAUDINE. I should think so!

VÉTHEUIL. Of course.

CLAUDINE. It is an awful life — then the pettiness in the profession! You have no idea what it's like!

VÉTHEUIL. Oh, but I have. It's like all of life, for that matter. The other day I was at the home of a good middle-class family, on their estate near Mantes. Their hallway was hung with colored supplements from the *Courrier Français!* So nowadays Forain has taken the place of cheap red cloth. Do you see the symbolism?

CLAUDINE. Yes. — No, I have no regrets for the theater. In fact, I have become very bourgeoise — I'm afraid of society, and I rarely see people.

VÉTHEUIL. How well we understand each other! We have quite the same distastes! About this time every year I detest the sight of Paris; I'm disgusted with the debauchery — the young ladies, the dear married women, the flirts, and coquettes — I simply must run away!

CLAUDINE. I know exactly how you feel.

VÉTHEUIL. Then I hide myself in some quiet nook in the country: I fish, hunt, read good books, and think. In short, I live, live — here I do nothing at all.

CLAUDINE. And you are right. I too love the country. — You're leaving soon?

VÉTHEUIL. At the end of the month.

CLAUDINE. Alone?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes.

CLAUDINE [*incredulously*]. Hm!

VÉTHEUIL. Quite — indeed — as sure as —

CLAUDINE. One and one make two!

VÉTHEUIL. Absolutely alone — why should you doubt me?

CLAUDINE. Well, your reputation — ! If those ladies to whom you just referred make you sick, the sickness must have agreeable compensating qualities. — You are seen about with them a good deal.

VÉTHEUIL. What does that prove? I act the part of a man who is being amused, but my heart is empty.

CLAUDINE. If you're tired of that life, why don't you marry?

VÉTHEUIL. Oh — ! Couldn't think of it! My heart *is* empty, but it is not yet worn out!

CLAUDINE. The woman you'll marry some day would be pleased to hear that — Will you have something to drink?

VÉTHEUIL. Thanks, I will.

CLAUDINE [*ringing for a* SERVANT]. What would you like?

VÉTHEUIL. Whatever you suggest.

CLAUDINE. Brandy and soda?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, brandy and soda.

[*Enter* PROSPER]

CLAUDINE. Prosper, some brandy and soda.

PROSPER. Very well, Madame.

CLAUDINE. Has the governess gone out with baby?

PROSPER. Not yet, Madame.

CLAUDINE. Tell her that I want baby to come and kiss me before she leaves.

PROSPER. Very well, Madame.

[*He goes out*]

CLAUDINE. Too bad you don't want to marry!

VÉTHEUIL. Why so?

CLAUDINE. Because I know of a charming young lady with a large dowry.

VÉTHEUIL. Give her to a poor man.

CLAUDINE. Perhaps you know her? Mlle. Valréal.

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, I know her — nothing extraordinary.

CLAUDINE. It's strange how indulgent men are toward the women who ruin them, and how severe on those who bring them money.

VÉTHEUIL. We must preserve our independence, you see.

CLAUDINE. Then you really don't want to marry? [*To the* SERVANT, *who brings brandy and soda*] Put it there. [*To* VÉTHEUIL] And you are sick of the "ladies." It's serious. You must now fall in love and have a great affair with some wonderful woman.

VÉTHEUIL. I lack the necessary means.

CLAUDINE. That's not nice. They're not all like that. I must cling to my illusion that there are some women in the world who still cherish love for its own sake.

VÉTHEUIL. For less than that even!

CLAUDINE. Try a pretty middle-class woman, a married woman.

VÉTHEUIL. Dangerous nowadays: they make you promise to marry them. Furthermore, a married woman is no longer romantic. I remember when I was eighteen, if one of my comrades was said to have an affair with a married woman, he at once assumed the proportions of a hero, but to-day a high-school student would not think of such a thing — it would be so banal!

CLAUDINE. Now you're exaggerating. I firmly believe that love exists to-day. It's funny I should have to defend those women: there must be some among them who are not so black as you imagine.

VÉTHEUIL. Very few.

CLAUDINE. More than you think. But you don't seem to know just what you want.

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, I must have someone like —

CLAUDINE. Like?

VÉTHEUIL. Nothing. [*He rises*] Madame, will you allow me — ?

CLAUDINE. Going so soon?

VÉTHEUIL. It's very good of you, I'm sure. I've stayed rather long for a first visit — I'm afraid I have trespassed on your good-will.

CLAUDINE. Not in the least. Stay only a few minutes longer —

VÉTHEUIL. Truly I'm not intruding? You have nothing to do?

CLAUDINE. I find you very interesting. You may go a little later, unless —

VÉTHEUIL. I am delighted to stay here with you. [*He sits down again*]

CLAUDINE [*sitting*]. Are you bored then?

VÉTHEUIL. No, never — I have too many troubles!

CLAUDINE. What? You're happy, aren't you?

VÉTHEUIL. It's my own fault, I imagine. How is it possible for us, living in this age of self-analysis, to be entirely happy, or entirely unhappy? Happiness is a very simple matter, after all, too simple for us — unhappiness too.

CLAUDINE. How true that is! Just the same, you give me the impression of a very puzzling sort of person.

VÉTHEUIL. I do my best — only human beings are complicated mechanisms. You, too, are — so is life, so is everything — infinitely complicated. Did you ever find yourself in the middle of a forest, in one of those clearings where half a dozen paths cross, and not know which led to the château, which to the village, the farm, and the railway station?

CLAUDINE. We call that *St. Hubert's Square* or the *Place of the Guards.*

VÉTHEUIL. Exactly; well, at every step in life we are confronted with these squares, and we have no idea whither we are going.

CLAUDINE. Especially when we don't know where we want to go.

VÉTHEUIL. That is also true.

CLAUDINE. Yes, and it all goes to prove that we should remain quiet and calm and composed — then we don't have to choose a path.

VÉTHEUIL. But that is not living.

CLAUDINE. No, it isn't.

VÉTHEUIL. Do you find life amusing?

CLAUDINE. Amusing? No. Only

I have a companion of whom I am sure, who is devoted, and for whom I have a great deal of affection. I have a daughter whom I adore, and I live in tolerable luxury. I have little to complain of, and I am rarely bored. That is all I can say.

VÉTHEUIL. You're not saying that for my benefit?

CLAUDINE. For whose, then?

VÉTHEUIL. You say that in order to persuade yourself.

CLAUDINE. You mustn't put such ideas into my head — it's impertinent!

VÉTHEUIL. Psychology!

CLAUDINE [*laughing*]. Downright violence!

VÉTHEUIL. Now at this moment I enjoy that calm and quiet of which you spoke, but I feel the need for something further: emotion, trouble, joy, and even suffering — yes, suffering!

CLAUDINE. I know what you mean. When we are without those emotions, that suffering, we ask ourselves what we are doing anyhow. We seem to be losing, wasting our time — and that quiet existence is more painful than sadness itself. We think of our past sufferings in order to suffer in the present!

VÉTHEUIL. Exactly.

CLAUDINE. So, then, you seem to be ready for a great love affair?

VÉTHEUIL. You too!

CLAUDINE. Sh! [*Pointing to* DENISE, *who is about to enter with the English* GOVERNESS] There is my *grande passion!*

[*Enter* DENISE *and her* GOVERNESS]

DENISE. Good-by, mother dear. I'm going for a walk.

CLAUDINE. Good-by, sweetheart, have a nice time! [*To the* GOVERNESS] Take her to the *Pré Catelan* — and don't stay too long — not later than seven.

DENISE. Are we coming back by way of the *Acacias?*

CLAUDINE. Yes, my angel, you are coming back by way of the *Acacias.*

DENISE. Then I can't be home by seven.

CLAUDINE. Why?

GOVERNESS. She told me the other day that the stylish ladies don't go there until seven.

CLAUDINE. Then you may stay till half-past. Are you glad now? Come and say good-by to this gentleman. There he is.

[DENISE *goes to* VÉTHEUIL, *who offers to kiss her, but the child gravely holds out her hand*]

VÉTHEUIL [*very ceremoniously*]. Good-by, Mademoiselle.

DENISE. Good-by, Monsieur.

[DENISE *and the* GOVERNESS *go out*]

CLAUDINE. The child has a character all her own. [*A short pause*] No — what you were saying just now — real happiness consists in sacrificing one's life to children!

VÉTHEUIL. Then where do *I* come in?

CLAUDINE. Don't you like children?

VÉTHEUIL. I adore them, but I have none.

CLAUDINE. Well?

VÉTHEUIL. There must be two of us.

CLAUDINE. *She* is not hard to find!

VÉTHEUIL. She is when you look for her — then there's a long and arduous time to wait!

CLAUDINE. Well — what shall we say, then?

VÉTHEUIL. Isn't it rather hard on a man whose heart is in the right place to put a woman whom he is supposed to love in that ridiculous and dangerous position — for the result is never sure!

CLAUDINE. Luckily everyone doesn't think as you do.

VÉTHEUIL. Then there is the great responsibility: deformed children, for instance —

CLAUDINE. You're considering extreme cases.

VÉTHEUIL. Or imbeciles, which are worse! Deformity is possible, but — no, I prefer adoption — a healthy child well brought up — like your daughter, now!

CLAUDINE. It isn't that you're afraid — you're simply like a man who buys an establishment fully furnished: you're looking for a bargain.

VÉTHEUIL. That is merely taking advantage of the folly of others.

CLAUDINE. Hardly a nice thing to say about Denise's father!

VÉTHEUIL. I don't know him. [*Rising*] I really must go now.

CLAUDINE. No!

VÉTHEUIL. I'm afraid of boring you.

CLAUDINE. You needn't be. I assure you I have nothing to do — I mean it — otherwise I should say so.

VÉTHEUIL. Then I'll stay. This is pleasant, talking with you! You are

very pretty, gracious — and you seem very good!

CLAUDINE. I don't think I'm bad!

VÉTHEUIL. But I shall have to go before long. It will seem like the darkest night when I leave.

CLAUDINE. Now, now — !

VÉTHEUIL. I have passed a charming hour here with you — charming — I should like nothing better than to prolong the visit.

CLAUDINE. You may do that in your memory — and you may come again — I should like to see you occasionally.

VÉTHEUIL. The atmosphere which you seem to create about yourself has already enwrapped me; I fear if I came again it would penetrate, possess me — through and through —

CLAUDINE. I hardly think so.

VÉTHEUIL. What *do* you think?

CLAUDINE. I think that you like to make yourself agreeable to me, and that you are doing all in your power to that end — it's bred deep in your character; — if you were in the presence of another woman, I think you would be absolutely the same. You see, I'm not playing the coquette with you — you are more feminine than I.

VÉTHEUIL. You believe me incapable of a true and deep sentiment, because I always seem to be making game of myself. But that is no reason.

CLAUDINE. Yes, I know — I can believe that with all your apparent skepticism you can be very tender and sentimental. You are, aren't you?

VÉTHEUIL. Like — the stars.

CLAUDINE. Yet with all your skepticism, you can be jealous?

VÉTHEUIL. I am instinctively jealous, but I restore the balance with the aid of my reason. I can be very jealous for no reason at all, and know it all the time; but in that case I never show my jealousy.

CLAUDINE. And when you have reasons?

VÉTHEUIL. Then I am impossible: I hate the human race. If I happen to be at a social function, the hostess usually drops some remark about "not bringing your friend again"!

CLAUDINE [*laughing*]. Just like me: ridiculous, jealous, sentimental! You've said so many things that I have thought out myself, but never put into words! Strange how much we are alike!

VÉTHEUIL. Birds of a feather, you know.

CLAUDINE. Yes — er — no! No! — Never! [*Short pause*] Are you constant?

VÉTHEUIL. Constant? That depends.

CLAUDINE. Oh!

VÉTHEUIL [*laughing*]. I don't think we should be forever boring each other.

CLAUDINE. I'm sure we shouldn't.

VÉTHEUIL. Now with you I'd be constant, because you have every desirable quality to make a man absurdly so.

CLAUDINE. Absurdly, but not eternally.

VÉTHEUIL. You haven't enough illusions.

CLAUDINE. And for that reason, if I were in love I should be very much to blame, knowing the dangers I was exposed to!

VÉTHEUIL. Not to blame, but merely prepared, which is more amusing.

CLAUDINE. And more serious! But let's drop the subject — it's out of the question: I'm a good little stay-at-home *bourgeoise*.

VÉTHEUIL. Nonsense! You are a woman capable of love — you will love again. I'm not fool enough to say I am the man, but — you will love.

CLAUDINE. Heaven preserve me! I have no wish to go through what I have already endured! What deceit, what tears, what sleepless nights, what aching for vengeance! How mean and silly it all is! Yes, silly. And now you say it must be gone through again? And then the final breaking-off: the death, and the agony after death? That breaking-off! Can you calmly contemplate that?

VÉTHEUIL. I don't contemplate it, I try to avoid thinking of it, because in love "The only victory is flight." That is why my valise is always in readiness — that wonderful little leather valise of mine — with half a dozen shirts in it, two suits — one of them dinner dress — flasks of Eau de Cologne and tooth powder — all ready for flight, in the manner of soldiers preparing a pontoon bridge, with their baggage on the boards. After fifteen minutes' riding, one can be at the frontier. I have noticed that invariably those moments passed in packing the valise are the worst; it's just then that friends interfere, *she* returns and cries — and you're lost!

CLAUDINE. And have you had occasion to use that valise?

[*Enter the* COUNT DE RUYSEUX]

COUNT [*kissing* CLAUDINE'S *hand*]. Dearest!

CLAUDINE [*introducing*]. M. Georges Vétheuil; Count de Ruyseux.

[*The men bow, then the* COUNT *extends his hand to* GEORGES]

COUNT [*to* CLAUDINE]. Have a pleasant party?

CLAUDINE. Delightful; the children had a good time, and so did their mammas.

COUNT. Splendid!

CLAUDINE. Ravier worked the Punch-and-Judy show — he was so funny!

VÉTHEUIL. Oh, it was Ravier — ?

CLAUDINE. Do you know him?

VÉTHEUIL. A young man who recites monologues and acts in private salons. Who doesn't know Ravier?

CLAUDINE. He's so amusing! He can imitate any actor.

VÉTHEUIL. He knows how to be agreeable in company — odious animal!

CLAUDINE. You're not kind!

COUNT. And how about Denise?

CLAUDINE. Denise acted the part of hostess with honor; she was quite the little mistress of the house, quick, and conscious of her own importance. What an amusing little woman she was! Do you want to hear your daughter's latest?

COUNT. Do I?

CLAUDINE. As soon as she was dressed, after lunch, she came to show herself to me, and as I was admiring her, I said: "My, my, what a pwetty dwess and what lovely hair!" She said: "Now, mother, talk like grown-up people: say 'pretty' and 'dress'; that other way isn't funny, it's childish!"

COUNT. Remarkable!

CLAUDINE [*turning to* VÉTHEUIL]. She's only eight!

VÉTHEUIL. Positively terrifying!

COUNT. Well, I spent a part of the afternoon with my old friend, the Marquis de Nezelles; he's going this evening to the dress rehearsal of *Tannhäuser* at the Opéra.

CLAUDINE. Lucky! I should like to have gone — I never see anything nowadays —!

COUNT. To-morrow you'll read a letter we composed together for the *Figaro*.

CLAUDINE. What about?

COUNT. That incident at the Savoy.

CLAUDINE. What incident?

COUNT. You know: there were too many guests, so that there had to be two tables. Monseigneur presided over one, and the Duke de Luynes over the other. It seems that the people at the Duke's table didn't have the same menu as those at the Orléans table. Certain papers commented on the fact, and made a number of misstatements, which we have rectified in our letter — you know, Monsieur, I am an old Royalist — does that shock you?

VÉTHEUIL. Not in the least, Monsieur — I don't dabble in politics: I am more Anarchist than anything else.

COUNT. In that event we can understand each other.

VÉTHEUIL. Temporarily, at least! [*He rises*] Madame, I really must ask your permission to go. [*He shakes hands with the* COUNT] Monsieur —

COUNT. Very glad to have met you, Monsieur. I hope to see you again.

[CLAUDINE *conducts* VÉTHEUIL *to the door*]

COUNT. Seems like a nice fellow — very pleasant. Where did you meet him?

CLAUDINE. In Pauline Gluck's booth, at the Sale for the Benefit of Artists' Orphans. She introduced us; I thought him agreeable, not at all stupid, quite intelligent. Then I've seen him from time to time in the Bois, and at the theater. He kept saying he was going to call, but not till to-day did he carry out his threat.

COUNT. You never said anything about him before.

CLAUDINE. Why should I?

COUNT. What sort of man is he?

CLAUDINE. I hardly know — I haven't had many opportunities —

COUNT. What does he do?

CLAUDINE. Nothing.

COUNT. Has he independent means? A fortune?

CLAUDINE. I scarcely think it could be called a fortune; he has enough to support himself comfortably.

COUNT. That is the main point. — You think him nice?

CLAUDINE. Yes, quite — he has a good disposition, too. I imagine he would be incapable of doing anything mean.

COUNT. That's the finest thing that can be said of anyone nowadays. What's his name? I didn't catch it?

CLAUDINE. Vétheuil — Georges Vétheuil.

COUNT. Wait a moment, I think I know that name. This Vétheuil was once in prison.

CLAUDINE [*indignantly*]. Never! That's impossible! My dear, you must be mad!

COUNT. Don't get excited. In 1880, at the time of the famous Ferry Decrees, a certain Vétheuil — 18 or 19 years old, who insulted the gendarmes as they were driving out the Dominicans of the Rue — Rue — never mind — was taken to the Station.

CLAUDINE [*reassured*]. Oh, I don't deny, of course — !

COUNT. That was in 1880. We are now in 1895: eighteen and fifteen, that's thirty-three. It might very well be — I'll ask him.

CLAUDINE. If it's he, you're going to fall on his neck.

COUNT. I don't say that, but he would run a better risk of pleasing me. [*Short pause*]

CLAUDINE. Any news?

COUNT. Nothing much.

CLAUDINE. Tell me what there is. No gossip? See anyone?

COUNT. Yes — met Langny.

CLAUDINE. What did he have to say?

COUNT. Nothing; since he's stopped making love to my wife, he cuts me dead.

CLAUDINE. Really?

COUNT. Rather, since he has dropped out of the number of those who make love to my wife!

CLAUDINE. Please, Alfred, you know how I detest hearing you say such things!

COUNT. Why so? I'm not at all bitter.

CLAUDINE. Of course; you're a philosopher.

COUNT. I'm not a philosopher; only, as everyone in Paris knows of my wife's conduct, my assumed ignorance of the fact would be childish, and might even give rise to grave suspicions; to brag of it would be odious in the extreme, but to mention it before certain picked individuals, like you, and in a light and graceful manner, that's the only decent way for a man who is well acquainted with the exigencies of life. I think there's a splendid place to fill between Georges Dandin and Othello!

CLAUDINE. You're a dilettante.

COUNT. If you like. But I have no illusions: there are certain people who were born to be deceived throughout life: I'm one of those.

CLAUDINE. You're proud of it.

COUNT. Not in the least. And don't tell me that you must be very handsome in order to have a woman remain faithful to you. I was good-looking when I was young — I can say it without boasting, because I am no longer so, but I really was a handsome young fellow.

CLAUDINE. So that even the little chimney-sweeps turned round when you passed by on the street?

COUNT. No — I shouldn't have cared for that. But really, I was what is called a handsome man — and I was deceived. Nor does it help a man to be a hero. When the war broke out, I had a charming girl — I left her to serve my country. I received a bullet in the arm, a saber cut in the leg, and military honors. But while I was lying in the hospital, *she* deceived me. Then I married: I had a noble name, I was rich, I was one of the leaders of my party. I was again deceived. I am not considered an exception: that's my consolation.

CLAUDINE. No, but you *are* an exception because of the way in which you resign yourself —

COUNT. I do what seems reasonable: infidelity, or let us say change, has become a natural law; and it is a regrettable fact that our national genius has always treated the logical working-out of that law with a ridicule which is sometimes turned into tragedy.

CLAUDINE. That is so, but what else can one do?

COUNT. Keep well in mind that the law of change should of all laws be the most inevitable — so that we might resign ourselves to it; from early youth we should be forced to meditate upon inconstancy, just as girls at the convent are forced to meditate upon death.

CLAUDINE. Rather difficult! It's not in the French temperament.

COUNT. I'm sorry!

CLAUDINE. Let's not talk about it, though. The subject is not a very pleasant one to me.

COUNT. Nothing personal, you understand?

CLAUDINE. I hope not!

COUNT. I have the greatest confidence in you — yet you are young, attractive; men make love to you.

Some day, you'll cast a partial glance at one of them —

CLAUDINE. But you are already prepared!

COUNT. When I say that I have the greatest confidence in you, I mean that I believe you would never make a scandal or cause me to appear in a ridiculous light. That is as much as I have a right to ask. — What time is it? — Seven already! I must get dressed!

CLAUDINE. Dining out to-night?

COUNT. No, I have some company at my place: Humbert, the painter, who is in love with the Countess.

CLAUDINE. Humbert? Isn't he the one who is always painting those foolish, fat little women — with a good deal of underclothing exposed to the vulgar gaze?

COUNT. He's the one. The Marquis de Nezelles and I have written a little fable about him. Here it is:

"A wondrous, magic thing is Art:
One paints a lady in scant attire,
In corset, petticoat — admire
This lucky artist who did part
From Belgium and who made his flight
Successfully o'er all the land,
And there was made by Fortune's hand
In Honor's Legion a doughty knight!
Moral:
Lucky artists never paint historical pictures."

CLAUDINE. How deliciously foolish you are!

COUNT. It's life! Out of our great sorrows we build fables to fit. — Good-by, dearest. — Hasn't Denise come in yet? Kiss her for me when she does.

CLAUDINE. I sha'n't forget. — When shall I see you again?

COUNT. I'm coming to lunch to-morrow — it'll put me in good humor.

CLAUDINE. Good, lunch to-morrow. I'll give you shrimps *au gratin!*

COUNT [*at the door*]. You're a saint!

[*He goes out*]

[CLAUDINE *is pensive for a moment, then* PROSPER *enters, carrying a letter. She reads it, then looks at the signature*]

PROSPER. An answer is requested.

CLAUDINE. Very well — I'll call you.

[PROSPER *goes out*] From Vétheuil! [*Reading*] "Dear Madame, on returning to my room, I find I have two tickets for the dress rehearsal at the Opéra to-night. You said you would like to go. I enclose the tickets. If you feel as you did this afternoon, allow me the pleasure of accompanying you; tell me when to come," etc., etc. — He's losing no time! [*She considers*] No, I'll not go! [*She goes to her desk, puts the tickets in an envelope, rings for the* SERVANT, *and gives him the envelope as soon as he comes in*] There is the answer!

ACT II

CLAUDINE ROZAY'S *boudoir. Doors to the right and left; a large window opening over the street; a recess, beyond which a bedroom and a large bed — with the bedclothes turned down — are seen; a soft light suffuses the bedroom. At the back is the door of* DENISE'S *room.*

[CLAUDINE *and the* COUNT *enter from the left*]

CLAUDINE. I must see Denise — I'm a little anxious about her. She had a fever this evening.

COUNT. Growing-pains, doubtless — she's tired.

CLAUDINE. I hope it's nothing more. Stay there, and don't make any noise.

[*She opens the door at the back and goes out, returning a few moments later*]

COUNT. Well?

CLAUDINE. She's asleep — seems all right. She holds her pillow like this — my living image, the angel!

COUNT. Your dinner was a huge success. It went off splendidly.

CLAUDINE. Didn't it? I hope the guests weren't too bored. I'm all tired out. — Do you mind if I undress?

COUNT. Not at all. I must be going.

CLAUDINE. No, no — stay — you're not in the way. Ring for Clara, will you?

COUNT. Why?

CLAUDINE. To unhook me.

COUNT. You don't need Clara — I can do that.

CLAUDINE. No, you can't.

COUNT. Let me try.

CLAUDINE. If you like — the waist first.

COUNT [*unhooking*]. Is this the waist?

CLAUDINE. Yes — slowly now! What a hurry you're in! Now the skirt — there are three hooks at the belt.

COUNT [*struggling vainly*]. Don't see how this is managed! It's not easy! I don't see — !

CLAUDINE. Here, come to the fireplace, you can see better there. Now, sit down, you'll find it easier.

COUNT [*sitting down*]. Good! It's coming.

CLAUDINE. Is it all right?

COUNT. Wait: not yet. — Damned dressmakers! Don't see how you can stand being bound like that!

CLAUDINE. It's not tight at all!

COUNT. I can't understand! Whew — I give up!

CLAUDINE. I told you — ! I'll call Clara now. [*She rings*]

[*Enter* CLARA]

CLAUDINE. Clara, unhook my skirt.

COUNT [*sitting in an armchair*]. What was the matter with Vétheuil this evening? He didn't seem very happy.

CLAUDINE. I didn't notice: he looked as usual.

COUNT. He was sitting with little Jamine, who seemed to think him very agreeable.

CLAUDINE. Really! [*To* CLARA] Get my kimono, please.

COUNT. You heard her, didn't you? She asked him to accompany her home.

CLAUDINE. I didn't notice. [*To* CLARA] Get my kimono, please.

COUNT. Charming fellow — I like him immensely.

CLAUDINE. Yes, he is nice. [*To* CLARA] Get my slippers, and take off my shoes.

COUNT. What do you think of my friend Chérance?

CLAUDINE. How do you mean?

COUNT. How do I mean? He spoke with you — he talks well.

CLAUDINE. Yes, interesting — and yet rather tiresome.

COUNT. He likes to hear himself talk — but he's not at all an ordinary man. He's written a very remarkable book on the *Divine Right.*

CLAUDINE. I didn't know that — but I did notice he seemed to enjoy the dinner —

COUNT. He has a very fine brain —

CLAUDINE. Helped himself twice to ices.

COUNT. Capital ices they were! Where did they come from?

CLAUDINE. Alexandrine's, as usual.

COUNT. Curious! My wife deals there regularly, only things never taste as good as they do here. You lay a better table than she does.

CLAUDINE. Yes?

COUNT. Fact, well known all over Paris.

CLAUDINE. There are two Alexandrines — one good, one bad. Mme. Alexandrine sold out to Mme. Biard — she's at the corner of the Rue de Londres, and does business under the name of Alexandrine; but the real Alexandrine, the one who sold her business, is now at the Place du Havre — but she's a competitor: she's the imitator.

COUNT. When you're buying ices, where should you go?

CLAUDINE. To the imitator, of course. The original makes ices that smell of *pommade.* — Thank you, Clara, I sha'n't need you any more — you may go to bed.

[CLARA *goes out*]

COUNT. I'm going to say good-by to you to-night, dear.

CLAUDINE. Good-by? Are you leaving to-morrow?

COUNT. Yes, I must go to Naples; I've just received a telegram.

CLAUDINE. Another conspiracy?

COUNT. I shall be away about a week.

CLAUDINE. You're lucky to be going to the land of sunlight and blue sky.

COUNT. I'm not lucky, for I can't take you with me!

CLAUDINE [*making conversation*]. Ah, Italy! [*Short pause*]

COUNT. It's a long time since you allowed me in your boudoir when you were retiring.

CLAUDINE. Has it been so long?

COUNT. You don't remember — I do! [*He kisses her*]

CLAUDINE [*surprised*]. What's this?

COUNT. I'm kissing you! May I not kiss you?

CLAUDINE. Certainly!

COUNT. You seem offended?

CLAUDINE. Not in the least! Only I was a little surprised. I wasn't expecting — you know how nervous I am! Now — you may kiss me again. [*She offers her cheek*] Be nice now, there, there!

COUNT. "There, there" — as if to say: That's enough! What perfume are you using this evening?

CLAUDINE. The usual kind.

COUNT. What?

CLAUDINE. Secret mixture — my own.

[*The clock strikes ten*]

COUNT. Is that ten?

CLAUDINE. Yes. — How sleepy I am!

COUNT. Well, I'll leave you! Good-by!

CLAUDINE. Good-by.

COUNT [*goes to the window*]. Claudine!

CLAUDINE. Yes.

COUNT. What weather!

CLAUDINE. Snowing, isn't it?

COUNT. You're not going to send me out on a night like this!

CLAUDINE. How do you mean?

COUNT. I mean, in this awful weather?

CLAUDINE. Why, you have your carriage, dear; it's waiting for you. You have nothing to complain of. Clara has brought a heater for you. You must go, or the water in the heater will get cold. Your coachman must be freezing to death — and the horse — think of the poor horse!

COUNT. Well, I'll go. But I should like to have gone — comforted — my heart warmed up!

CLAUDINE. How?

COUNT. You know.

CLAUDINE. Would you like a glass of Cognac?

COUNT. I said, my heart! — From *you* — dear Claudine! [*He takes her in his arms*]

CLAUDINE. Stop, you're hurting me!

COUNT [*reproachfully*]. Oh, Claudine!

CLAUDINE. You *did* hurt me!

COUNT. I'm sorry, I beg your pardon. — I'm going.

CLAUDINE. You mustn't blame me — you understand — you must be indulgent toward a hostess who has entertained fifteen people at dinner — and after. I'm all limp, nervous — Denise isn't well — and then, between old friends, dear!

COUNT. My fault, I know — I can't help if I love you, adore you — I know I'm not much like a real lover, I'm an old fellow — !

CLAUDINE. You are Denise's father!

COUNT. Yes, yes, you love your daughter now, and I have no right to be jealous. Forgive me!

CLAUDINE. My dear!

COUNT. Only, this evening, I did help you unhook, didn't I? I was — intoxicated! The most staid of men have moments when the brute is uppermost in them.

CLAUDINE. No, you weren't brutal — you're exaggerating.

COUNT. You're always a dear! Sleep well! Good night! — Am I — am I ridiculous?

CLAUDINE [*kissing him*]. You're so good! [*After he goes out*] Poor man!

[CLAUDINE *is alone. A carriage is heard driving off: then* CLAUDINE *draws back the curtains a little, and places the lamp so that its light can be seen outside. Then, carefully, noiselessly, she opens the door whence the* COUNT *has left.* VÉTHEUIL *appears*]

VÉTHEUIL [*in a long overcoat, the fur collar of which is turned up*]. What weather! Fearful, the snow!

CLAUDINE. Are you cold?

VÉTHEUIL. Frozen through. I've been waiting in the street for an hour.

CLAUDINE [*brusquely*]. It's not my fault.

VÉTHEUIL. My dearest, I'm not blaming you — I'm only too glad to be near you now! You know very well I'd pass a whole night like that to be with you for five minutes! [*He tries to kiss her*]

CLAUDINE. Your nose is frozen. Go to the fire and warm yourself.

VÉTHEUIL. Warm yourself, soldier, warm yourself! Ah, the warm fire! This is comfortable! You know, I saw that nice little Jamine home?

CLAUDINE. Yes, I know.

VÉTHEUIL. How is everything?

CLAUDINE. Splendid.

VÉTHEUIL. Your dinner was superb.

CLAUDINE. Ah!

VÉTHEUIL. What's the trouble?

CLAUDINE. Nothing.

VÉTHEUIL. Something's the matter?

CLAUDINE. I tell you: nothing!

VÉTHEUIL. Oh!

CLAUDINE. What have you been doing to-day?

VÉTHEUIL. Now for the little cross-examination!

CLAUDINE. Yes.

VÉTHEUIL. Well, I got up at eight: shaved, washed, combed my hair, and dressed. I wore my gray suit, Scotch tie — no, it wasn't —

CLAUDINE. Now, don't try to be funny!

VÉTHEUIL. I'm not, I merely want to be exact, as exact as possible.

CLAUDINE. It's not funny, and I'm not laughing — go on!

VÉTHEUIL. Then I went out: to Hahn Meyer's to see some old engravings he had just acquired. I picked out two for you, pretty ones, colored, with original margins. I took them to be framed. You'll have them a week from to-morrow.

CLAUDINE. Well — ? Then?

VÉTHEUIL. Oh, not at all — I'm only too happy — it's really nothing!

CLAUDINE. What?

VÉTHEUIL. I thought you would at least thank me! Then I had lunch at the club.

CLAUDINE. Then?

VÉTHEUIL. Then I went to Francueil's.

CLAUDINE. Ah! Why? I told you not to go there!

VÉTHEUIL. I know, but he sent me a message this morning asking me to come.

CLAUDINE. Couldn't he see you?

VÉTHEUIL. Now, that's not fair. What have you against him?

CLAUDINE. I — I — well, I don't like him.

VÉTHEUIL. I simply had to go: I can't cut him dead, you know. He never harmed me, and he never even obliged me — if he had, then I should have the excuse of ingratitude. I might never see him again. — After all, he's a friend.

CLAUDINE. A companion in vice! And such vice! You yourself told me all about it when you were making love to me.

VÉTHEUIL. It was wrong of me. It's always wrong to tell things of that sort — later on it's used as a weapon against you —

CLAUDINE. Oh!

VÉTHEUIL. Why don't you like him?

CLAUDINE. He has no heart, no moral sense. I know he has a lot of women at his place; he knows all the evil parts of Paris. When you visit him, you always seem to regret that you can't do as he does.

VÉTHEUIL. Nothing of the sort!

CLAUDINE. Well, I don't like it. — Why, he's never seen twice with the same woman!

VÉTHEUIL. That's not his fault! It was his dream to have and to keep one woman, but they have always either deceived or deserted him.

CLAUDINE. H'm!

VÉTHEUIL. That's what made him what he is. Well, if you object to him on the ground of his inconstancy, you may rest at peace now: he's been with the same lady for six months.

CLAUDINE. She must be having a splendid time!

VÉTHEUIL. She adores him.

CLAUDINE. He must be spending a mint of money!

VÉTHEUIL. She's not asked for a sou.

CLAUDINE. How stupid! Do such women exist? Was she there when you were?

VÉTHEUIL. I didn't see her if she was. Francueil was alone. He asked me to say good-by to him — he's leaving.

CLAUDINE. Bon voyage! He *must* love her!

VÉTHEUIL. He's mad about her.

CLAUDINE. Is he taking her with him?

VÉTHEUIL. Oh, no! To begin with, she's married, then he's going too far away. He's had a beautiful yacht built and is going on a cruise. He's just bought a *Comores* for a song.

CLAUDINE. At auction?

VÉTHEUIL. No, in the Indian Ocean. My dear little one, the Comores are islands. Seriously: they form an archipelago between the coast of Africa and Madagascar. He means to have a stopping-place, an island, in each of the oceans, forming a chain: in the Marquesas, the Cyclades, the Touamotous.

CLAUDINE. What are you talking about?

VÉTHEUIL. It's true. He goes first to Siam — extraordinary way! Think of it, he once knew an Irish girl who was one of a party of Hungarian ladies, once the mistress of an envoy of the King of Siam. That ought to interest Paul Bourget, don't you think so? From this Irish girl, through her envoy, he obtained letters of introduction to the King, who will meet him as he lands, and escort him to the palace on his elephant, with pomp and ceremony and military bands. He's lucky! What a trip!

CLAUDINE. Lucky? Think so? You may go, too, if you like!

VÉTHEUIL. That's not the question.

CLAUDINE. I'm not keeping you: you are quite free.

VÉTHEUIL. I know that.

CLAUDINE. In any event, you can't say I didn't offer you an opportunity.

VÉTHEUIL. An opportunity — bound with fetters of steel — but I am quite

happy. Francueil asked me to go with him, yet you know very well I'd a thousand times rather stay with you!

CLAUDINE. You wouldn't leave Paris — anyway — All your lady friends!

VÉTHEUIL. What do I care about them? I have you!

CLAUDINE. You seemed to care about Henriette Jamine this evening.

VÉTHEUIL. Not in the least!

CLAUDINE. What was so interesting in her conversation, then?

VÉTHEUIL. Did I even listen? — Well, she told me about her engagement at the Palais-Royal.

CLAUDINE. Is she engaged there? They must be in need of people for their curtain-raisers! But that wasn't what made you smile.

VÉTHEUIL. Did I smile?

CLAUDINE. Yes, you did.

VÉTHEUIL. Oh, she was telling me of her affair with the Prince of Styria.

CLAUDINE. Was she — ? I never heard of that! Strange how every woman tells you of her amours. Why, I've known Henriette for ten years, and she never said a word about that. See, in five minutes' time she told you everything.

VÉTHEUIL. Is it my fault if women — ?

CLAUDINE. Hm! You take an interest in their adventures, you invite confidences, become a confessor, a psychologist, you look deep into their eyes, read their hearts — it's a great game, Monsieur Prudence! That's what maddens me! I know I oughtn't to tell you all this — it's foolish, imprudent, but I simply can't help it — My God, what a fool I am!

VÉTHEUIL. Listen, Claudine! My Claudine! This is unjust! Why, I come here, wait an hour in the street — it's cold, snowing — all for the inexpressible joy of seeing you for a few moments, and this is how you welcome me! It's anything but amusing to wait for *him* to leave — leave *his* place for me! You see, I check my dignity at the door for the pleasure of proving that I love you!

CLAUDINE. *You* are not jealous!

VÉTHEUIL. No? Let me tell you, I *am* jealous, only I am reasonable about it. I don't blame you, make scenes — for nothing — and I'm not digging into the past. It doesn't concern me; it oughtn't to concern you!

CLAUDINE. But Henriette Jamine isn't the past — that was this evening, this very evening! I wasn't the only one who noticed it: Ruyseux noticed it, and when *he* notices — !

VÉTHEUIL. He should mind his own business.

CLAUDINE. What do you mean?

VÉTHEUIL. And you played the coquette yourself, with Chérance!

CLAUDINE. I?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes. I didn't intend to speak of it — it's absurd! — but as you began this dispute, I might as well do my share. Of course you were hostess — you could do what you liked!

CLAUDINE. I had to treat my guests decently — in my own home!

VÉTHEUIL [*loudly*]. You can go very far with that ideal of hospitality! Of course, in your own home! There might be no limits to amiability!

CLAUDINE [*in an undertone*]. Please don't talk so loud; you'll wake my daughter. This is nonsense — vulgar nonsense. You know very well I'm not that sort of woman. — If I was a trifle coquettish it was only because you were so attentive to little Jamine. It was revenge.

VÉTHEUIL. But I hardly know her — it was nothing at all. I scarcely know the lady. At least — I saw her and I may never see her again. But Chérance — ! Everyone knows he's making love to you, that he has only one end in view, it's — of course! His eyes were glued on you all evening, while Ruyseux, who was blind, didn't interfere! I wanted to shout out to him: Look! Open your eyes! You're — I don't know!

CLAUDINE. If he weren't blind, my friend, you wouldn't be here.

VÉTHEUIL. That observation, my friend, is superfluous. [*A pause, then* VÉTHEUIL *says quietly*] Claudine!

CLAUDINE. Yes?

VÉTHEUIL. We are happy, both of us; at bottom we love each other. — This is love, the deepest kind of love. You know perfectly well that I adore you and that I would willingly send Henriette Jamine and all the others to the devil for your sake. We have only a few hours together — a few minutes — and here we are arguing!

CLAUDINE. Whose fault is it?

VÉTHEUIL. Mine, without the shadow of a doubt. Only, you must be indulgent and take me as I am. Come to me; forgive me.

CLAUDINE. You always say things to wound me: you were on the point of accusing me of being Chérance's mistress.

VÉTHEUIL. No, no, no. I said he was making love to you. That's true. Forgive me.

CLAUDINE. Nonsense! He adores his wife; she's given him five children, and is now expecting a sixth.

VÉTHEUIL. What does that prove? I can't prevent men's thinking you pretty and wanting you, yet the moment you love me, I object to it. Come, Claude dear, don't sulk — you're unbearable that way. Little scenes like this are necessary — of course — they're natural. But now it's all over, eh? Kiss and make up! [*They kiss*]

CLAUDINE. Heavens, how hungry I am! Just think, I was so taken up with watching you at dinner that I scarcely touched a thing!

VÉTHEUIL. How ridiculous! I, too, was so busy watching you that I nearly starved.

CLAUDINE [*laughing*]. What fools we are! But we can make up for it! I'm going to the kitchen and see whether anything's left.

VÉTHEUIL. Shall I come with you?

CLAUDINE. No, no — I'll be back at once. [*She disappears*]

VÉTHEUIL [*at the door*]. Bring some bread — above all, bread.

[*Left alone, he clears off a little table, which he moves toward the fireplace. Then* CLAUDINE *returns with provisions*]

CLAUDINE. Here's all I could find: the servants didn't touch their own dinner, but they nearly finished ours.

VÉTHEUIL. Which goes to prove that the remains of ours was better than all of theirs.

CLAUDINE. There's only cold filet and cherry preserves.

VÉTHEUIL [*sententiously*]. There are always preserved cherries left over.

CLAUDINE. And truffles, but I think those don't agree with you.

VÉTHEUIL. They don't, but I eat them all the same: philosophically.

CLAUDINE. Why, there's no bread! This is all I could find! [*She shows a small crust*]

VÉTHEUIL. What a pity! That doesn't surprise me, either. There is never any bread left!

CLAUDINE. I didn't bring napkins or cloth; what shall we put on the table?

VÉTHEUIL. Our elbows.

CLAUDINE. Shall we?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes! Lay those things anywhere. — Champagne on the mantle — I'm glad there's no table cloth! Let's sit on the sofa,[1] close together.

CLAUDINE. Good!

VÉTHEUIL. How charming you are! Here, give me your glass, and the moment the cork goes "pop," you say: "Heavens, what a time I'm having with the students!" [*He starts to open the bottle*]

CLAUDINE. Don't let it pop — it'll wake baby!

VÉTHEUIL. Worry not, Queen of Mothers, I'll let it pop gently. [*He opens the bottle and pours out the wine*] Well?

CLAUDINE. Oh, yes, "Heavens, what a time I'm having with the students!" Were you hungry?

VÉTHEUIL. As a bear.

CLAUDINE. Nice, isn't it, to be supping together here by a warm fire, with the cold wind blowing outside? — Are you cosy?

VÉTHEUIL. Divinely happy and content.

CLAUDINE. To think that there are people who sleep in the streets in this weather!

VÉTHEUIL. Yes. Not long ago, while I was waiting, I saw a poor devil of a violinist, with his box under his arm — looked like the skull of his own child. That black man in the snow was a melancholy sight!

CLAUDINE. Poor fellow! Did you give him something?

VÉTHEUIL. I didn't dare: he didn't ask.

CLAUDINE. That happens sometimes — people who don't dare: rich people who are ashamed. They haven't the right not to dare!

VÉTHEUIL. You're delightful, Claudine! You have the kindest heart, the finest feelings of any woman I ever knew.

CLAUDINE. Is that true?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes; you say things at times that bring tears to my eyes, almost.

CLAUDINE. You love me?

VÉTHEUIL. Infinitely!

CLAUDINE. I don't ask for the adverb. You love me?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes.

[1] A pun: "Sur le pouf" and "sur le pousse" — which is untranslatable.

CLAUDINE. Now for your trouble, I have some news.

VÉTHEUIL. Quick; what?

CLAUDINE. Ruyseux is going away to-morrow, to Naples; he'll be gone for a week. If you care to, and if Denise is well enough, we'll spend two or three days in the Forest at Fontainebleau. We'll go to Gray, where we were this autumn, in Mère Piérard's charming and tidy little inn. It'll be delightful now. I've always wanted to see the Forest in mid-winter, and wake up in the morning, pull back the shutters, and see the huge black trees, and the long white roads, and the pale blue sky! To lie warm in bed, and say to yourself that just outside the window it's so cold — !

VÉTHEUIL. Excellent idea!

CLAUDINE. I'll write to an old friend of mine at Sanlis, Mme. de Liancourt, and tell her I'm coming to spend a few days with her. Understand?

VÉTHEUIL. Alibi.

CLAUDINE. Yes — and I'll bring Clara along.

VÉTHEUIL. No danger?

CLAUDINE. With Clara? She's quite devoted to me; I've had her ever so long. She was with me when Denise was born; I nursed her when she was sick with typhoid fever. Clara would willingly die for me!

VÉTHEUIL. What train shall we take?

CLAUDINE. Wait, I just looked at the time-table: there's a train at 10:57, which will bring us to Gray in time for lunch.

VÉTHEUIL. That seems all right, but 10:57 *is* a little early. Will you be ready?

CLAUDINE. To go with you, I could be ready at five, if necessary. And you?

VÉTHEUIL. I have only to dress: the valise is ready.

CLAUDINE. The famous valise — pontoon-bridge soldiers! You dear bad man, I can see you perfectly the day you told me about that, in the drawing-room downstairs. It was the first time you came to the house. I'll wager you don't remember what day that was?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, I do: June seventh, a Thursday.

CLAUDINE. And to-day — ?

VÉTHEUIL. September twentieth, a Friday.

CLAUDINE. June, July, August — December, January — eight months already. That's a long time, according to modern standards, for people to love.

VÉTHEUIL. And it's not over yet!

CLAUDINE. Oh, if anyone had told me that day how important a part in your life I should become, I should have been very much surprised — and yet I liked you. Now, don't assume that foolish look! You puzzled me a good deal — I was very curious about you.

VÉTHEUIL. Ah ha!

CLAUDINE. Then you tried to work on my emotions, with your beautiful voice, and those eyes — ! M. Vétheuil, you're an old coquette! [*She pulls his nose*]

VÉTHEUIL. That hurts!

CLAUDINE. That hurts, Henri! — Do you love your wife?

VÉTHEUIL. More than —

CLAUDINE. Then go, and let her retire.

VÉTHEUIL. Very well.

CLAUDINE. You must go — you've got to be up early.

VÉTHEUIL. Are you going to send me away like this?

CLAUDINE. Yes: now, seriously, run away. You must.

VÉTHEUIL. I must?

CLAUDINE. Yes, I'm entirely exhausted. Be considerate: I'll be so grateful.

VÉTHEUIL. Grateful?

CLAUDINE. Yes.

VÉTHEUIL. Why?

CLAUDINE. Because Denise is not well. I'm always afraid that that's my punishment for loving you.

VÉTHEUIL. Nonsense.

CLAUDINE. You know how superstitious I am where my daughter is concerned.

VÉTHEUIL. Claudine, this is heartless! You don't know how cold it is outdoors!

CLAUDINE. You still insist?

VÉTHEUIL [*kissing her*]. Because I love you, I adore you! I should like to have — I'd thought —

CLAUDINE [*disengaging herself*]. Sh! Don't say that!

VÉTHEUIL. Why?

CLAUDINE. Oh, nothing. [*Resolutely*] Not this evening.

VÉTHEUIL [*looking at her*]. Ah, I understand.

CLAUDINE. What? What do you understand?

VÉTHEUIL. I understand, and so do you.

CLAUDINE. Georges, your insinuation is hateful. He *was* here just now, but — I swear — No! I told you some time ago what I had to tell you on that point: you ought to be reassured.

VÉTHEUIL. You all say the same thing.

CLAUDINE. Because you ask the same thing. But I swear to you, by my little girl — ! May she die if I am lying! — you see how calm I am! — Do you believe me?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, I believe you.

CLAUDINE. Don't be jealous: it's a luxury. — Poor man!

VÉTHEUIL. Do you expect me to pity him?

CLAUDINE. You might. He's not very happy with his wife — she goes about in public with other men.

VÉTHEUIL. Why doesn't he divorce her?

CLAUDINE. Because they are members of a circle where divorce is out of the question. You know, when a woman is unhappy there, her confessor advises her to have a *liaison* in preference to a divorce. What then can be done in the man's case? Why should he divorce her? If he did it for my sake, he would be badly recompensed.

VÉTHEUIL. At least, he would be deceived on one side only.

CLAUDINE. See, you are not really jealous of him?

VÉTHEUIL. At bottom, I am not.

CLAUDINE. Do you like him?

VÉTHEUIL. Very much.

CLAUDINE. He idolizes you. [*The clock strikes three*] Here we are, the two of us, at three in the morning. What if some one were to come in? Who would believe that we were two platonic lovers? No one.

VÉTHEUIL. And my recompense?

CLAUDINE. Not later than to-morrow. Now go, only I want you to say nice things to me before you leave. But you needn't if you don't wish to.

VÉTHEUIL. Claudine, you know I adore you — you're the best, prettiest — ! You are mine, wholly mine — I can't think of any other woman than you! We may quarrel from time to time, but that is nothing — we do understand each other, don't we? Once in a while there arises a faint shadow of remorse, of pity, between us — for *him!* And when you're out of humor, you mustn't blame me! Claudine, Claudine, this is how I love you — with all my power of devotion — ! [*He kneels before her*]

CLAUDINE. That's enough — now I'm happy. Run away, and don't make any noise. I'll go out onto the balcony and watch you, keep you warm as long as possible.

VÉTHEUIL. That's not wise! You'll catch cold — I don't want you to — !

CLAUDINE. Yes, I'll wrap up warmly.

VÉTHEUIL. No, no — If you do that, I'll kill myself under your very window.

CLAUDINE. I sha'n't insist then. Well, to-morrow morning — 10:57. Don't forget.

VÉTHEUIL. How could I? — Good night, beloved!

CLAUDINE. Good night, my lover!

[VÉTHEUIL *goes out. After a moment,* CLAUDINE *extinguishes the lamp, then partially opens the door into* DENISE'S *room, to see whether the child is sleeping*]

ACT III

VÉTHEUIL'S *study. There is a large table, and some bookshelves around the walls. The room is dignified and elegant as to furnishings, but not sumptuous.*

VÉTHEUIL *and* DE SAMBRÉ *are present.*

VÉTHEUIL. Cigar good?

SAMBRÉ. Excellent, old man, just the kind I like — rather strong.

VÉTHEUIL. What will you drink? Forty liqueurs to choose from.

SAMBRÉ. God bless you! I'll have a Kümmel frappé. Summer is here and one must have cold drinks. Do you know how to make cocktails?

VÉTHEUIL. Why — no.

SAMBRÉ. Lord, you must learn. A friend of mine, awfully rich — likes to drink — went to America just to learn how to make cocktails: took lessons for a year from the barkeeper of the Hoffman House in New York. Then he became a barkeeper himself in New Orleans — they make the best cocktails in Louisiana, you know.

VÉTHEUIL. I didn't know, but I'm glad to hear it.

[*Enter a* SERVANT]

SERVANT [*handing* VÉTHEUIL *a card*]. A gentleman. He would like to see Monsieur.

VÉTHEUIL. Ask him to come in.

[*The* SERVANT *goes out*]

[*Enter the* COUNT DE RUYSEUX]

COUNT. How are you? Hope I'm not intruding?

VÉTHEUIL. Not in the least: I'm very glad to see you. Let me present my old friend Paul de Sambré — Count de Ruyseux. [*The men bow*] Sit down.

COUNT. I sha'n't stay long. I just came to ask why you didn't appear yesterday?

VÉTHEUIL. Yesterday? Where?

COUNT. I thought so! You forgot you were invited to dine with Claudine and me, and that we were going to the *Folies-Bérgères* afterward to see the début of the Princess Soukhivitchi.

VÉTHEUIL. That's so! I forgot all about it. I was so busy yesterday! I've just been putting some affairs in order that I hadn't looked at for ten years. I was all topsy-turvy. Did you wait long for me?

COUNT. Naturally — you didn't let us know — I was afraid you might be ill.

VÉTHEUIL. I'm dreadfully sorry, but it quite slipped my mind. I beg your pardon a thousand times!

COUNT. That's all right. The important point is to know you're not sick.

VÉTHEUIL. Did you enjoy yourselves? How was the Princess?

COUNT. Very pretty.

VÉTHEUIL. A real princess?

COUNT. Yes — legally married to the Prince Soukhivitchi. She came of a great family herself, the La Roche-Ferrières — I used to run around there when I was a child, but I'm not at all proud! — She married this Prince Soukhivitchi, though she didn't love him. She has an aversion to men.

VÉTHEUIL. There is every variety of taste in nature.

SAMBRÉ. Rather a handicap to her!

COUNT. They separated after a year: each had been kicking over the traces. She was left without a sou, so when her family refused to give her money, she went to the *Folies-Bérgères* to spite them.

VÉTHEUIL. Must have been a packed house. They didn't whistle her off?

COUNT. No — that is to say, the fashionable part of the audience, in the boxes, gave her a warm reception and hearty applause. But the gallery seemed to understand that she was doing a low trick, and protested vigorously. Then she sang songs to calm the people, a new style all her own — "*Chansons vaches*" — I've never heard such vileness.

SAMBRÉ. They'll go the rounds of the salons.

COUNT [*rising*]. Doubtless. Well, I must go. [*To* VÉTHEUIL, *who escorts him to the door*] Come to the Place des États-Unis a little later, if you have a few minutes to spare. I don't know what's the matter with Claudine: she's moody, bored, fidgety — you seem to be the only one who can handle her. Come and see her: it'll be an errand of mercy.

VÉTHEUIL. With pleasure — I'll try to — I'm waiting for a telegram just now. I may be forced to leave town any moment: pressing affairs — family matters.

COUNT. Where are you going?

VÉTHEUIL. I don't know.

COUNT. You don't know where your family is? You are a funny fellow! Invite you to dinner and you forget to come. You *are* a character!

VÉTHEUIL. Now, now —

COUNT. Well, good-by. [*To* DE SAMBRÉ] Very glad to have made your acquaintance, Monsieur. [*They shake hands.* VÉTHEUIL *conducts the* COUNT *out and then re-enters*]

SAMBRÉ. Was that the Count de Ruyseux?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes.

SAMBRÉ. He's the —

VÉTHEUIL. Yes.

SAMBRÉ. Nice fellow.

VÉTHEUIL. Yes.

SAMBRÉ. Very amiable; very!

VÉTHEUIL. Very! Altogether quite charming —

SAMBRÉ. Tell me, have you fallen out with *her?*

VÉTHEUIL. How do you know that?

SAMBRÉ. All Paris knows it, my dear fellow — except one!

VÉTHEUIL. All Paris had much better mind its own business. Now I understand why you came to see me: you've come to study me, to pry into my troubles. Well, I have no trouble, and I am not unhappy! I may suffer to-morrow, I may suffer within an hour, but for the present, I am in the

best of spirits. Tell that to All Paris, Doctor!

SAMBRÉ. I sha'n't fail to.

VÉTHEUIL. I am happy, very happy, because I'm free! That's what was weighing on me continually: I felt all the time I was a slave. How good it is to come and go when I like, to do what I like from hour to hour and minute to minute, to see my friends — in other words, to live!

SAMBRÉ. My dear fellow, that's not of prime interest to me. So much the worse for you, I say, if your mistress was so absorbing as all that.

VÉTHEUIL. You have never really loved, have you?

SAMBRÉ. I have loved but one woman, and she was a servant: when I was thirteen my mother's maid possessed for me every possible charm. Her name was Césarine — she was a blonde from Bordeaux. Of course, a child of thirteen hasn't a very definite or individual character — I realize now that Césarine may not have been all I imagined her in former days.

VÉTHEUIL. Probably not.

SAMBRÉ. Since then I have had numerous affairs, but they have never been of real importance.

VÉTHEUIL. You know, I admire you.

SAMBRÉ. My dear fellow: the Orientals, understanding women perfectly, have put them in their proper place. Now we live in the Occident; we don't veil our women and put them under lock and key and a guard, but we must put them, metaphorically speaking, in the harem, and not allow them to wander about in the domain of our thoughts, nor the avenues of our heart, nor the little streets of our occupation. Understand?

VÉTHEUIL. Perfectly. But if the woman breaks out of her metaphorical harem? If she deceives you? It's inevitable!

SAMBRÉ. Every contingency has been considered. Under the conditions I have made, woman won't trouble us; that is the main point. She will find her power over us greatly reduced: when she gives herself, either to you or to your neighbor, then you can see it all in its true colors and appraise it at its real worth, and not its factitious value, which is merely the result of our prejudices, our pride, and our sentimentality.

VÉTHEUIL. But what should we gain by knowing the real worth?

SAMBRÉ. You do away with love-making, chivalrous nonsense, jealousy, everything that takes up good time — occasionally a whole life. A man of twenty-five, if he falls under the influence of a woman, can do nothing serious or useful in life. I don't know how old you are — thirty-four? You've wasted your time, you've lost yourself in the folds of a petticoat, in the midst of the ocean of the world, like the diver in his glass clock, that Jean-Paul speaks of. — Well, I say there are more interesting things to do, and in any science, more infinitely fascinating problems to solve.

VÉTHEUIL. You're mistaken: love is itself an art and a science.

SAMBRÉ. Nonsense! Hasn't it always been the same? Every love affair ends the same way: it's very faulty mathematics that tries to resolve it into rules of three.

VÉTHEUIL. That's all very well, but you forget that certain people are born lovers, just as poets or musicians are born —

SAMBRÉ. Or butchers! We must learn to scorn love.

VÉTHEUIL. Trot along with your scorn. — You pretend love is powerless because *you* cannot be loved. What right have you to talk of love, you who never got beyond your mother's maid? I was not in the least surprised to hear you say that "every contingency had been considered." I tell you there are women with whom these contingencies are of singular importance; and when they give themselves, body and soul, I — I find the gift worth the trouble!

SAMBRÉ. You *are* excited about it!

VÉTHEUIL. Not at all — only there are certain sensations, emotions —

SAMBRÉ [*ironically*]. Intoxications!

VÉTHEUIL. Yes — intoxications, which you have never dreamed of!

SAMBRÉ. Ah, yes! [*Declaiming*] "Eternal angel of happy nights, thou who will tell of thy silence! Oh, kiss, mysterious union, poured by the lips as from cups! Intoxication of the senses, oh divine sweetness! Yes, like God, thou art immortal!"[1]

VÉTHEUIL. It's easy to jeer — and further, that's only literature you quote now! But there are certain memories

[1] Alfred de Musset, *La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle.*

not to be recalled by words: landscapes of happiness seen again only in the inner silence of the heart — tender backgrounds with wide-sweeping, calm, wave-like lines. A melody once heard, a perfume breathed — and you live again in all their intensity the hours of yesteryear, you live with the soul you had then. Then life becomes worth living. Why, I remember — no, you wouldn't understand —

SAMBRÉ. Never mind.

VÉTHEUIL. I feel sorry for you.

SAMBRÉ. I feel sorry for you: you love her still — and you will suffer again.

VÉTHEUIL. No — I'm going away to-night, so —

[*Enter a* SERVANT]

SERVANT. A lady, who would like to speak with Monsieur —

VÉTHEUIL. Tell her to come in.

[*The* SERVANT *goes out*]

SAMBRÉ. I'll run, old man. You say you're leaving to-night; but I know it's not *adieu*, only *au revoir*. I'll come in to see you to-morrow about this time —

VÉTHEUIL. No use!

[DE SAMBRÉ, *as he is leaving, finds himself face to face with* HENRIETTE JAMINE. *He stands to one side and allows her to pass*]

[*Enter* MME. JAMINE, *as* DE SAMBRÉ *goes out*]

VÉTHEUIL. How are you, friend?

MADAME JAMINE. How are you, monster? You are a pretty one! — It's nice here.

VÉTHEUIL. That's so: you've never seen my rooms. Now, to what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?

MADAME JAMINE. Can't you guess?

VÉTHEUIL. No.

MADAME JAMINE. I've seen Claudine.

VÉTHEUIL. Ah!

MADAME JAMINE. She's very sad.

VÉTHEUIL. I'm not gay myself, but whose fault is it? Not mine, surely?

MADAME JAMINE. You've not been over-nice to her.

VÉTHEUIL. Did she say I beat her?

MADAME JAMINE. No, but you make her very miserable.

VÉTHEUIL. *She* is doing that. Well, what does she have to say?

MADAME JAMINE. That there was an awful scene; she said you left in a mad fury, and hadn't been to see her for two days.

VÉTHEUIL. It was fearful, and so downright stupid!

MADAME JAMINE. What was the reason?

VÉTHEUIL. You'd never guess — in a thousand guesses: about a horseback ride.

MADAME JAMINE. What, she's not jealous of your horse?

VÉTHEUIL. No, but when I go to the Bois, she has forbidden me to go through certain lanes; she's afraid I might meet some of my lady friends.

MADAME JAMINE. Is *she* as jealous as all that?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes — it's perfectly absurd. Well, the day before yesterday, in the morning, I disobeyed orders — I was seen in the *Acacias* — one of the forbidden drives —

MADAME JAMINE. *Acacias!* I should think so!

VÉTHEUIL. In the afternoon I visit Claudine, am received as if I'd committed a crime against love — I don't know, it's as if I'd made love to Clara, after forcing her to give up her religion.

MADAME JAMINE. Not as bad as all that!

VÉTHEUIL. Ah yes! That's the way it began — it was childish.

MADAME JAMINE. She loves you; she's like every woman who is really in love: jealous and domineering.

VÉTHEUIL. But there are limits!

MADAME JAMINE. If you'd only seen me and Philippe — I adored that boy! — I would never let him go unaccompanied to a restaurant, to the theater, or the races! I made him fall out with all his friends, and made any number of scenes. I made life miserable for him. He was the only man I ever really loved. We women are always like that when we truly love.

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, it's a sort of revenge.

MADAME JAMINE. And the arguments and quarrels —! I remember, one day he was teasing me about a woman — he was in the bath tub. I hit him over the shoulder with a riding-whip.

VÉTHEUIL. Really? What did he say?

MADAME JAMINE. He turned white as a sheet — I thought he was going to kill me — then he said: "Get out!"

VÉTHEUIL. And you escaped?

MADAME JAMINE. In a jiffy. I wasn't really in earnest, though.

VÉTHEUIL. Then what happened?

MADAME JAMINE [*simply*]. Reconciliation — that's love!

VÉTHEUIL. Yes — there are people who like to be beaten — but I'm not one of them. Thank God, our love was not of the riding-whip variety, but it gave signals of distress, as it were.

MADAME JAMINE. So soon! How long have you known each other?

VÉTHEUIL. It will soon be a year.

MADAME JAMINE. A year? It can't end like that!

VÉTHEUIL. Yes. There's no other way out. There must at least be some sort of change.

MADAME JAMINE. You ought to be indulgent: you know her so well! You are stronger than she is — be kind to her — try to —

VÉTHEUIL. I have, but for some time these scenes have been of almost daily occurrence. The slightest thing, or nothing, will precipitate one. She's so jealous!

MADAME JAMINE. Of what? Of whom? There are no grounds, are there?

VÉTHEUIL. Of course not; that's why it's all so absurd. She's jealous of everything — of you! Why, one night she gave me a severe talking to because she thought I was paying too much attention to you!

MADAME JAMINE [*with dignity*]. That was wrong of her. When a man is already disposed of, I wouldn't for a moment consider — ! He's sacred. I've often said to myself: Claudine is not careful enough, she's too domineering, she'll have an awful bump some day.

VÉTHEUIL. Like a cable that's too tight. There are times when you can see it's going to break: in technical language, the cable is warning. Well, what happened yesterday was one of those warnings. [*A pause*] Did she send you?

MADAME JAMINE. Yes, but she told me not to say so. She loves you, she adores you; she's sick — suffering. Don't be hard with her.

VÉTHEUIL. I'm not.

MADAME JAMINE. You'll not soon again find another woman like her — so good, so intelligent!

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, I know.

MADAME JAMINE. You were to have dined with her and Ruyseux last night — it seems you didn't go?

VÉTHEUIL. I forgot all about it — word of honor! Otherwise I should have sent word, without fail!

MADAME JAMINE. She thought it was done purposely, especially as she knew you dined with Ravier and his crowd.

VÉTHEUIL. Yes?

MADAME JAMINE. There were some ladies of accommodating virtue there; she imagined you might have been with one of those.

VÉTHEUIL. Good Lord, no! You can assure her! What could lead me to do that?

MADAME JAMINE. To forget, to drown your sorrows!

VÉTHEUIL. No, no — the chase Claudine has been leading me for some time has made me forget myself. I'm completely changed. What I want now is peace, rest. I'm leaving to-night; going to bury myself in Brittany, by the seashore, all alone.

MADAME JAMINE. You're going away? But I can't tell her that!

VÉTHEUIL. You don't have to — but I'm not going away forever — this is not flight.

MADAME JAMINE. Are you going without seeing her, or saying good-by?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, I mustn't see her at this time. I must collect myself, see clearly — alone.

MADAME JAMINE. You can't do that — it would cause her a great deal of pain.

VÉTHEUIL. I'll write; she'll have a letter this very evening — full of tenderness — and I'll explain it all much better than you could. You needn't say a word to her. Promise you won't say anything!

MADAME JAMINE. I promise.

VÉTHEUIL. Now I want you to be with her when she gets this letter — I'll manage to have it arrive at seven — in order that you may tell her in what frame of mind you found me, and that I adore her. — Only, I tell you I must have a change — this couldn't last — I must take a decisive step.

MADAME JAMINE. That's clear enough, but what shall I tell her now? She's waiting for me.

VÉTHEUIL. Tell her I wasn't at home.

MADAME JAMINE. That's good; well,

I'll run along. Write her a nice letter. Good-by.

VÉTHEUIL. Good-by — thanks for coming. You are a true friend.

MADAME JAMINE. I love you both. Good-by, *bon voyage*, and come back soon.

[*She goes out*, VÉTHEUIL *rings*]

[*Enter the* SERVANT]

SERVANT. Monsieur?

VÉTHEUIL. Pack up — I'm going away immediately.

SERVANT. Will Monsieur be gone long?

VÉTHEUIL. No: a week or two at the outside. I'll take only my valise, the yellow one. Put it on the sofa, together with the traveling rug, so that I only have to take them and go.

SERVANT. At once?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, at once.

[VÉTHEUIL *performs the pantomime of a man considering the composition of a difficult letter. Meantime the* SERVANT *has brought the valise and traveling rug, and placed them on the sofa. Then, while* VÉTHEUIL *is writing his letter, the door quietly opens, and enter* CLAUDINE]

VÉTHEUIL [*hearing the door open, lifts his head. Then he rises*]. You!

CLAUDINE. Yes, I. [*She sits down. A pause. She coughs*] How smoky!

VÉTHEUIL. Shall I open the window?

CLAUDINE. Never mind — you weren't expecting me?

VÉTHEUIL. No.

CLAUDINE. See, I'm not proud: I come to you, as you don't come to me. Only — Jamine has just come from my house — or — why lie about it? I was waiting for her in my carriage outside. She told me you were going away. Is that true?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes.

CLAUDINE. So, if I hadn't come, you would have gone without saying good-by? What have I done? Men leave women who have made them suffer, who have deceived them, who are exercising an evil influence over them. You have nothing to complain of.

VÉTHEUIL. I should have been gone only a few days. Then — I was just writing to you.

CLAUDINE. Why write? So that what you had to say would be more definite, irreparable — ? Now you may say what you had to say; I'll listen. I sha'n't make a scene — you seem to imagine that's my specialty, that I make your life miserable.

VÉTHEUIL. A corrupted version must have reached you: if I determined to write instead of seeing you, it was simply because I was afraid, not of you, but of myself.

CLAUDINE. You were afraid of being weak — you might pity me! But I have no need of pity. Now you are perfectly free to tell me everything.

VÉTHEUIL. Very well, let us have a frank explanation. Listen, Claudine. I love you. [*Gesture from* CLAUDINE] Don't doubt it. I love you — and for that very reason, the life I'm living now is no longer endurable. I love you so deeply that I can't bear the thought of sharing you with anyone else. You must be all mine, just as I am all yours.

CLAUDINE. But am I not?

VÉTHEUIL. No — things exist between us — you know. It's very irksome, for instance, to wait at night, until *he*, your — until he goes!

CLAUDINE. Is that all you object to? You haven't had to wait often. He is a friend: you knew that when we first met — I didn't lie about it.

VÉTHEUIL. Doubtless, but we're continually going round and round. At first, I didn't fully realize, I didn't know him then. Now I take his hand in mine everyday — I've learned to appreciate him, respect him! He has such confidence in me! I feel it's not right to lie to him, deceive him.

CLAUDINE. But what about me? You can't be more of a Royalist than the king?

VÉTHEUIL. That may be, but our love must not be founded on lies. There must be nothing between us: you must choose.

CLAUDINE. How can I?

VÉTHEUIL. That was what I was going to suggest. I want you to be with me.

CLAUDINE. Where?

VÉTHEUIL. No matter — in my house — anywhere — it makes no difference.

CLAUDINE. You want me to leave Ruyseux?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes.

CLAUDINE. No: I have no right. You're asking me to leave a man who has never been anything but kind to me,

a man I never had reason to complain of. It would be a terrible blow for him. It would be base — I can't do that. No, I can't.

VÉTHEUIL. Then you don't love me?

CLAUDINE. Don't be foolish : I love you, and I won't let you doubt it for a second. You know that only too well. Listen to me: if you happened to be obliged to fight a duel for a point of honor to-morrow, you would fight in spite of my prayers and deepest wishes — I might — die of it. That's the way with women: there are certain circumstances under which we ought not to give in, even hesitate. We don't fight duels, we make sacrifices. That is why I cannot do what you ask me. Just consider; he adores me, he loves his daughter — can we both leave him? What would the poor man do? It would be cowardly — and you cannot ask me to do a cowardly act.

VÉTHEUIL. How you love him! And yet you are unfaithful to him.

CLAUDINE. He doesn't know — and he doesn't suffer — isn't that the main point? Then there is — my little girl.

VÉTHEUIL. Yes — Denise — I —

CLAUDINE [*putting her hand over his mouth*]. Sh! Yes, my little girl: I must think of her future: if I went off with you, if there were to be a scandal in my life, some day, when it was time she married, it might be said to her, "Birds of a feather — "

VÉTHEUIL. But — now — her father isn't your husband!

CLAUDINE. Yes, but there is just as much hypocrisy needed in the circle where I live, as in the *real* one — the *other*, if you like! Then there are material considerations which we must keep in mind. If I went off with you, would her father continue to look after her? He is a man of honor — that's undeniable — but there *is* a limit! Then I don't want Denise to have to go through what I did, all alone — I know too well what it cost me: the suffering, the dangers. And nowadays, more than ever, young girls must have dowries.

VÉTHEUIL. What can I say? Of course those are all splendid reasons. What you say makes me think, deeply. And yet, if you really loved me —

CLAUDINE. Yes, I know what you are going to say: passion is its own excuse — but that applies only to brutes. You might cite cases where women have given up all for their lovers. We know of them, yes! but we don't hear of the others, whose hearts have been broken, who did their duty, and said nothing.

VÉTHEUIL. According to that, then, your first duty was not to have become my mistress.

CLAUDINE. Our duty is not to injure those who have been kind to us.

VÉTHEUIL. But I have given up everything for you! The day I first knew you, I gave up my freedom: I settled within a stone's throw of you. I have completely rearranged my mode of living, given up my friends, without a thought for myself!

CLAUDINE. I appreciate it, but you see you were sacrificing yourself, not others. Oh, if I were alone, do you think I should care for comforts and luxury and money? You know very well I should go with you wherever you liked, live on two hundred francs a month in the country, so that I might be with you alone — body and soul — because I love you!

VÉTHEUIL. Is that true?

CLAUDINE. Oh, yes! But to do that now would be cowardice — it's out of the question. If this life is no longer possible, if I make you unhappy, then you are right to leave, at once, and forget me. When you return we can be friends — if I am still here.

VÉTHEUIL. No, Claudine, I cannot forget you, and as for being friends, that's not reasonable. Yes, just now I wanted to go away. I was quite determined before I saw you, but the moment you entered the room, I knew I could never go. I had made up my mind in advance — but you know I can't exist without you — your voice, your presence, your caresses — your head on my shoulder — I must adore you, and keep telling you how I adore you. Everything else, if need be, may remain as before, we can continue without wronging anyone — we must plan it out, that's all. If we are aware of the danger, we have only to avoid it. You will be a little less domineering, jealous, and I more patient and forgiving. You won't be as you were the day before yesterday — !

CLAUDINE. You *were* cruel! Think of not coming to see me all day!

VÉTHEUIL. This explanation was bound to come — now it's over. Let's forget it — we love, don't we?

CLAUDINE. Yes!

VÉTHEUIL. That's the important point.

CLAUDINE. Then you're not so much to be pitied?

VÉTHEUIL. No.

CLAUDINE. We have spent some wonderful hours together, haven't we?

VÉTHEUIL. We have!

CLAUDINE. Kiss me.

VÉTHEUIL. Claudine! Let me look at you.

CLAUDINE. No, no, it's too light in here! I've been crying! I'm not at all pretty! [*She goes to the window, closes the curtains, fastening them together with one of her hat-pins. Then she comes back and sits down*] Now, it's more mysterious, and you can't see my red eyes. Come here, close to me, as we used to sit, dear. Remember, you were at my feet, your head on my knees, while we watched the night falling — we were the spirits of twilight and silence.

VÉTHEUIL. I adore you, Claudine! I adore you!

CLAUDINE. Wait, what am I sitting on?

VÉTHEUIL. Oh, let me take it away.

CLAUDINE. What is it?

VÉTHEUIL. My valise!

[*He takes the valise which the* SERVANT *had placed on the sofa, lays it on the floor, and returns to* CLAUDINE. *They embrace*]

ACT IV

Pallanza, on the shores of Lago Maggiore: a garden full of magnolias, on a terrace from which the lake and mountains can be seen through a crystal blue atmosphere — all under a sky illuminated by moon and stars. CLAUDINE *is in déshabille,* VÉTHEUIL *in traveling clothes.*

CLAUDINE. What time did you tell them to call for you?

VÉTHEUIL. Ten.

CLAUDINE. So soon!

VÉTHEUIL. I must be at the Locarno station for the eleven o'clock train.

CLAUDINE. And your baggage?

VÉTHEUIL. The coachman will call at the hotel first.

CLAUDINE. Will the carriage come to get you up there at the house?

VÉTHEUIL. No, I told the coachman to come here, to the garden.

CLAUDINE. My God! [*A pause. Then a fisherman on the lake is heard singing "Vorrei Morire!"*]

VÉTHEUIL. Listen! Our fisherman! [*Trying to smile*] He knows you're here, he's singing to you!

CLAUDINE. Yes, to me — I, too, should like to die on a night like this. Oh, when I think of to-morrow, and you away, I'll go mad. It's terrible! Why are you going so far away that I can't even write to you? Why did you accept that position to explore a land from which men never come back?

VÉTHEUIL. They return, but not very soon. That is just what I need! What both of us wished for! We have decided, haven't we, that we ought to separate? Haven't we?

CLAUDINE. Yes, only when we decided that, I was brave! To-night you are leaving, and I've — lost courage.

VÉTHEUIL. My dearest, I must go. You have no idea how hard it is to have to!

CLAUDINE. Can't you stay to-night, only to-night? Please, please — !

VÉTHEUIL. You know, dear, I have stayed as long as I could. I'm taking the last train as it is; I shall get to Marseilles just in time to catch the steamer. So you see — ?

CLAUDINE. No, I can't stand it! You mustn't go!

VÉTHEUIL. Now, now, Claudine, don't say that, don't make it harder! If I did stay, could we go on living as we have in Paris? With the same obstacles to overcome, the same scenes, wearing us out? They'd begin again to-morrow, we know that only too well. They are the result of the circumstances under which we exist, under which we first met. How often have we tried to be happy in spite of everything! We were never able — we never could be able, we should end by detesting each other, deceiving each other —

CLAUDINE. No, no, no!

VÉTHEUIL. Is that sort of life possible? No, it would be a hell, it would be degrading, after these weeks we've spent together here, so — alone! We have been so happy that it's impossible to be happier; we've had a month of happiness which nothing can efface —

CLAUDINE. Except the thought of having to separate —

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, but that thought merely puts a check on our spirits, prevents our happiness from becoming

insolent, gives it a tinge of melancholy, like the mist enshrouding the mountains in the evening, making their outlines less rugged, turning their enormous masses into something infinitely tender.

CLAUDINE. How you analyze sensations — how complex you are — at a moment like this! It's funny!

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, that's why I understood you, the day you told me you couldn't leave your friend or jeopardize your daughter's future. If you hadn't told me that, I should have said: Let the heavens themselves fall upon us, as they have upon so many others! Well, we have at least belonged entirely to each other this past month, without the shadow of an intruder — alone here by this lake which harbors so many loves like ours. We have been able even to cherish the illusion that we were free; we have been lovers, because we willed it. One month of pure happiness! We have had it, and now we must pay for it.

CLAUDINE. Then it's over — over?

VÉTHEUIL. Claudine, come here, let me tell you —

CLAUDINE. What? What do you want? Something reasonable again? Don't you *feel?*

VÉTHEUIL. Claudine, that's not kind! If you only knew how broken-hearted I am. I, too, have a Calvary to mount — only — it must — it must be!

CLAUDINE. Then I'll never see you again?

VÉTHEUIL. Of course you will — only, later, when we're cured.

CLAUDINE. Do you think — ?

VÉTHEUIL [*forcefully*]. Yes, we will be cured. We are now separating not because I have deceived you or you me, or because we are tired of each other; there exist none of the usual deceits or lies between us which commonly make love a bitter thing and wound it: we are separating because there are your friend and your little girl between us, because we cannot be happy with those dear ones between us. We are saying *Adieu*, but in what a marvelously beautiful land!

CLAUDINE. You say that as if to a woman who was going to drown herself in a beautiful river!

VÉTHEUIL. You don't understand — in a peaceful land, then. Later, not to-morrow of course, but later, when you think of this terrace at Pallanza, you will see again the mountains and the lake, all these beautiful surroundings, and when your mind turns to our separation, your sadness will, in spite of yourself, become a part of the peace and quiet.

CLAUDINE. No! Don't imagine that! It's nice of you to say it, but I'm positive I shall suffer for a long time, suffer cruelly — always! I detest this country, I hate it — I'm going away at once! To-morrow morning! Oh, if I could only go off somewhere alone, and suffer by myself, — ! But I am expected home — I've had my vacation — charming!

VÉTHEUIL. Now, Claudine!

CLAUDINE. I'm — too unhappy! You are going to travel and see new countries; you'll be interested, distracted, you're starting a new life! You'll forget me!

VÉTHEUIL. No — never!

CLAUDINE. Listen to me; I want you to promise one thing; don't think me absurd —

VÉTHEUIL. Why should I?

CLAUDINE. You'll think it's foolish?

VÉTHEUIL. Not in the least.

CLAUDINE. Here it is, then: it's very serious. I want you, every evening at the same hour, to look at the same star that I do — I can't write, you know. So every night at ten, we'll look at — oh, wait a moment! — the Great Bear; yes, the Great Bear, that's the only thing I can recognize. I never could distinguish the others.

VÉTHEUIL. I promise.

CLAUDINE. And when you are in that awful country, I'll think of you gazing at the same corner of the sky and at the same time as I. It's not much to ask — just that!

VÉTHEUIL. But when I'm in that awful country as you call it, it will be day for me when it's night for you — we can't see the same stars.

CLAUDINE. Why?

VÉTHEUIL. Because it's impossible to see the same section of the sky from every point of the earth's surface. Now, the earth, you understand — it would take too long to explain —

CLAUDINE. Are you sure? Couldn't we have only this one consolation? It doesn't seem right — ! How alone I'll be! You ought not to have told me!

VÉTHEUIL. I should have let you believe —

CLAUDINE. Sh! [*The tinkle of bells is heard in the distance*]

VÉTHEUIL. The carriage is coming.

CLAUDINE. Already! — Oh — God!

COACHMAN [*speaking in an Italian*

dialect]. Excellency, it's ten o'clock. The Excellency's baggage is here — carriage is below.

CLAUDINE. Tell him to wait five minutes!

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, yes — I'll come in five minutes —

[*The* COACHMAN *disappears.* CLAUDINE *and* VÉTHEUIL *sit in silence for a few moments*]

VÉTHEUIL. It's got to be!

CLAUDINE. Stop, listen — I can't — you mustn't go! Please! Please! I'll do what you say, I'll leave everyone! If I give him up would you stay?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes — but will you give him up?

CLAUDINE. If you ask me to!

VÉTHEUIL. You will? Are you sure? Do you realize what you're doing? He is your daughter's father, you'll break his heart, you in whom he has such blind faith! I must tell you these things, because if you decide, it must be for always. You can't retrace your steps — I sha'n't let you.

CLAUDINE. I should see him and confess; he is good, he would forgive me — he might even understand. Shall I tell him we love and that we must not be separated?

VÉTHEUIL. See? You can't. — Go to him? What an idea! There's not a man living who *would* understand these things! No, I must go.

COACHMAN [*appearing again*]. Excellency, it's ten-fifteen, we've just got time to catch the eleven o'clock at Locarno. Got steep grades to climb.

VÉTHEUIL [*to the* COACHMAN]. Good! I'm coming directly.

CLAUDINE. What does he say?

VÉTHEUIL. That it's ten-fifteen, and I barely have time to catch the eleven o'clock train at Locarno.

CLAUDINE. Well — good-by! [*They kiss, and cling for a time to each other*] Let me look at you, Georges! It is as if you were dying. Go, go! Don't say anything.

[*She falls on a bench, her head in her hands, and sobs.* VÉTHEUIL *leaves. The bells of the carriage tinkle more and more faintly, and then are no longer heard*]

ACT V

The large drawing-room in CLAUDINE'S *former home, which now belongs to* HENRIETTE JAMINE.

To-night is HENRIETTE'S *house-warming; lights, flowers, gypsies, and small supper tables fill the room. At each table three or four guests are seated.*

As the curtain rises all the guests are silently listening to BOLDI, *the leader of the gypsy orchestra, as he plays to* HENRIETTE.

MADAME SORBIER [*as soon as* BOLDI *has ended*]. Schlinder, please tell Boldi to come here; I want to hear that lovely piece again that we heard so often this Fall at Vienna — remember?

SCHLINDER. Of course, dear. [*Calling*] Boldi! Will you come here a moment and play Madame that love-song — ?

[BOLDI *comes to the table where* SCHLINDER *is seated and plays the requested number to* MADAME SORBIER. *As he ends*]

PRUNIER. Rather melancholy, don't you think?

MADAME JAMINE. No, I think it's very pretty.

PRUNIER. Quite sad, and I don't like sad music.

MADAME JAMINE. You'd like "Allume! Allume!" all the time, wouldn't you?

PRUNIER. There's a fine dancing rhythm to that, at least!

RAVIER. Galloping, even.

MADAME JAMINE. Well, I love melancholy music, the kind that makes you dreamy. There are certain tunes I'd like played to me — when some one's whispering sweet things!

PRUNIER. Why do you look at Ravier when you say that?

RAVIER. Don't take offense, Prunier, and don't spoil a delightful *soirée!*

PRUNIER. You're enough to try the patience of a saint with all your nonsense! As if music had anything to do with those things!

MADAME JAMINE. I'm sure Ravier understands what I mean.

RAVIER. Quite right, Madame: what a sweet confidential friend music is! You know, Massenet has just written music to a poem of Verlaine's. The song was so soul-stirring that it's been censored: now we have only the words.

PRUNIER. Nonsense!

RAVIER. Fact!

MADAME GRÉGEOIS [*at another table*]. What are we waiting for?

SAMBRÉ. Something — important.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. A pause of embarrassment —

SAMBRÉ. After sparkling dialogue and merry laughter there follows painful silence!

MADAME SORBIER. Who will propose a toast to our charming hostess?

SCHLINDER. According to the old French family custom.

MADAME SORBIER. That's Ravier's business!

SCHLINDER. Now listen to him say that it comes as a complete surprise! All evening he's been preoccupied like a man repeating an improvised speech by heart!

MADAME SORBIER. What did I tell you? There he is getting up!

RAVIER [*standing on a chair*]. Mesdames — Messieurs: it is without the slightest emotion that I take the floor —

SAMBRÉ. So you say!

RAVIER. I assure you I am not the least bit nervous.

SCHLINDER. Liar!

RAVIER. What do I risk? I am positive that whatever I may say you will all howl at me — so what would be the use in troubling my gray matter in order to search out new formulas? I therefore propose that we drink to the health of our hosts: first to Madame Henriette Jamine, our entrancing Amphitryon, whose beauty it would be superfluous to dilate upon, and also to the health of Ernest Prunier [*ironically*], the greatest cement dealer I have the pleasure of knowing.

ALL. Bravo! Bravo!

RAVIER. Gentlemen, does not this couple offer us an admirable object-lesson? To such a union, to so busy an existence, to such industrious and unceasing pursuits [*turning to* HENRIETTE] allow me, Madame, to drink, and [*turning to* PRUNIER] Monsieur, to Commerce and Industry!

ALL. Bravo! Bravo!

[*The conversation becomes general. While the tables are being taken out, the guests form into little groups. In one corner of the room stand* CLAUDINE *and* RUYSEUX]

RUYSEUX. Well, dear, what have you to say to all this?

CLAUDINE. It's been so long since I've seen anything of the sort that I'm a little bewildered. These people all seem a trifle mad. Their gayety isn't at all amusing. I suppose they don't find me very amusing, either?

RUYSEUX. You know very well you are the prettiest woman here!

CLAUDINE. Oh, oh!

RUYSEUX. And the most loved.

CLAUDINE. I believe that.

RUYSEUX. Well? We're no longer in "society" — we're not Parisians.

CLAUDINE. Thank God!

MADAME JAMINE [*in another corner, with* RAVIER, MADAME GRÉGEOIS, *etc.*]. Very charming little toast that was!

PRUNIER. I was really touched.

RAVIER. What I said was no more than the truth.

MADAME SORBIER. No indeed! — Lovely supper — we had a superb evening. You've arranged this place very tastefully. — Yes, charming housewarming.

MADAME JAMINE. This is only a beginning: I'm going to have any number of parties this winter.

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. It'll be gayer than it was with the former tenant.

MADAME JAMINE. Yes — *I* don't intend to live alone and have no company, the way Claudine Rozay did. I'll have big dinners, masked suppers —

RAVIER. Costumes with tails to them!

MADAME JAMINE. You silly! It'll be too gay for anything, won't it, Ernest?

PRUNIER. Yes, and we must have those little English girls, the Llewellyn sisters.

MADAME JAMINE. No, no, not the Llewellyn sisters. They monopolize all the men — and I don't think their influence over you is good. They make you sick! — And then we must present little comedies, too.

RAVIER. Do you know what you ought to do? Have a *Revue*.

MADAME JAMINE. Who will run it?

RAVIER. I.

MADAME JAMINE. Who will act in it?

ALL. We.

RAVIER. Would you consent to take part?

MADAME GRÉGEOIS. Consent? We would intrigue each other to death to get the best rôles!

MADAME JAMINE. I have some actor friends: Raymonde Percy, who played in *The Seven of Spades* —

MADAME SORBIER. What did she do in *The Seven of Spades?*

MADAME JAMINE. Ruined it!

SAMBRÉ. We should certainly have this *Revue*.

MADAME SORBIER. What shall I be?

RAVIER. Exposition of 1900, and you, Madame Grégeois, will be the God-mother —

MADAME JAMINE. Now that everything is decided, we can dance.

[*The gypsies play; couples begin to whirl about*]

RAVIER [*to* HENRIETTE]. I adore you!

MADAME JAMINE. Shh! Tell me that to-morrow. — Come at five!

RAVIER. Here?

MADAME JAMINE. Yes, here.

RAVIER. Our own house-warming?

MADAME JAMINE. Yes.

RAVIER. Nice?

MADAME JAMINE. Not bad!

[*Enter* GAUDERIC]

GAUDERIC. I beg your pardon, Madame, but I must go. Before I leave, however, I should like to have a few details for my article — that is, if you would care to have me mention your *soirée*.

MADAME JAMINE. By all means, Monsieur, but I really don't know what to say. Here is Monsieur Ravier, he can tell you everything much better than I could: he's used to it! Aren't you, Ravier?

RAVIER. I am.

MADAME JAMINE. Let me introduce you: Monsieur Ravier, Monsieur Gauderic.

RAVIER. Charmed.

GAUDERIC. Doubtless you don't know me under my own name: in *Le Trivelin* I write as *Feu Follet*.

RAVIER. Oh, I know *Feu Follet*.

MADAME JAMINE. What does it mean?

GAUDERIC. It means *Will-o'-the-Wisp*.

MADAME JAMINE [*looking at him and laughing, for* GAUDERIC *is homely and ordinary looking*]. Ha! Ha! *Will-o'-the-Wisp!*

RAVIER. Monsieur, if I can be of any assistance — ?

GAUDERIC. You know, Monsieur, what I would like. Usually the host sends a note telling of the *soirée*. The editor inserts it, sometimes *gratis*, sometimes not; it is ordinarily very insipid and formal — the literature of society. But on *Le Trivelin* we go about it far differently: I like to write the articles myself, live in the atmosphere for a few moments, in order to seize the floating *nuances*, the — personal, subtle air of the occasion. I do not recoil even before the indiscreet. Now you belong to the house here, do you not?

RAVIER. I'll tell you what to say: that Madame Henriette Jamine gave a delightful house-warming in her charmingly arranged little apartment, which Monsieur Ernest Prunier has just given her.

GAUDERIC. Ah, Prunier bought the apartment! Prunier, the cement manufacturer?

RAVIER. Yes: little presents cement their friendship. There's a clever line for your article.

GAUDERIC. Didn't this place belong formerly to Claudine Rozay?

RAVIER. Yes.

GAUDERIC. Why did she sell it? Hard pressed? Financial embarrassments?

RAVIER. Oh, no, she sold it because she didn't want it any longer: she decided to live in the country.

GAUDERIC. Any celebrities here? Could you give me some names?

RAVIER. Of what sort?

GAUDERIC. Any sort — makes no difference.

RAVIER. But you said celebrities. I mean what rank, what walks of life?

GAUDERIC. Politics, finance, art.

RAVIER. Well, there's Schlinder. [GAUDERIC *writes on his cuff*] Ah, you write on your cuff — like Monsieur de Buffon!

GAUDERIC. Yes: documentary cuffs.

RAVIER. Schlinder, Prefect of Police — retired two years ago; Count de Ruyseux, president of the Royalist committees; Vétheuil, just returned from Indo-China, where he was a member of the Renaud Expedition — then some other gentlemen of minor importance.

GAUDERIC. And the ladies? Can you give me some names?

RAVIER. The ladies are in mortal terror of publicity; they don't like to see their names in newspapers —

GAUDERIC. But they —

RAVIER. They are ladies of a very particular species — hm! — who are supported — and whose children are as well brought up as those of the most correct families. They make use of every charm known to femininity to

prevent their being spoken of. There lies the difference between them and women of the streets.

GAUDERIC. And duchesses! — I asked that because a little advertisement can do no harm.

RAVIER. Absurd! You and I know very well — no one is ever deceived. When the paper speaks of the beautiful Madame Fromage, who sang the *Jewel Song* from *Faust* like an angel, and Monsieur Le Pinson, who acted most successfully in his own peculiar style — !

GAUDERIC. Yes, we make a living off their snobbishness.

RAVIER. It's too absurd!

GAUDERIC. Many thanks, Monsieur, for your kindness.

RAVIER. Not at all, I'm only too happy to be able to help you. — Oh, by the way, you won't forget me in the little article, will you? Here's my card — I managed that last *Revue* at the club —

[*They go out. Enter* CLAUDINE *and* VÉTHEUIL]

CLAUDINE. We sha'n't be disturbed here. — So, you've come back to Paris at last?

VÉTHEUIL. Only last week.

CLAUDINE. And you've been away eighteen months! Were you traveling all the time?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, I helped explore marvelous and terrible lands. I was burned by the sun, frozen by the cold, nearly died of hunger and thirst, and made my way over twelve hundred leagues of desert.

CLAUDINE. Twelve hundred leagues! — Oh, sit down! — And what chance brings you here to-day?

VÉTHEUIL. No chance. My first thought on arriving in Paris was to come and see you — but I didn't dare.

CLAUDINE. Why? You might have done it — now!

VÉTHEUIL. I might — but still I was afraid. I went to see little Jamine. I heard she lived here, that she'd bought your old apartment. You can imagine what a turn that gave me! I thought something had happened to you, so I went at once to Henriette; she rattled off any number of tales — most of which I didn't understand — I did, however, make out that she was giving a housewarming to which you would naturally be asked, and I thought this a good opportunity of seeing you.

CLAUDINE. She didn't tell me a word about you!

VÉTHEUIL. She was afraid that if you knew perhaps you wouldn't have come.

CLAUDINE. Why?

VÉTHEUIL. I don't know.

CLAUDINE [*looking steadfastly at him*]. You've aged a little. — Why, here's quite a crop of gray hairs —

VÉTHEUIL. I have suffered a great deal: fatigue, hunger, everything imaginable. The greatest suffering was due to you!

CLAUDINE. Is that true?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes! You were deeply rooted in my heart. It was a terrible wrench to leave —

CLAUDINE. Then you did think of me?

VÉTHEUIL. A great deal. — But you haven't changed.

CLAUDINE. It's very nice of you to say it. I *have* changed: I, too, have some gray hairs, only — I dye them a little. I'd rather tell you, so that you may see I have had my share of suffering.

VÉTHEUIL. Dear Claudine! [*A pause*]

CLAUDINE. Do you remember, three years ago, when we sat and talked in this same corner for the first time, and I was so afraid of your — adventure? — Do you? See how everything I predicted has come true. But we wanted it to happen!

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, we did, yet there was something else which drew us together, and we may well say like children who are scolded: "It's not our fault!" In most cases they are right, it is not their fault if they were born gluttonous, or naughty, or lazy; nor is it our fault if we were born lovers. There are certain fatal forces which drive human beings into each other's arms — the law of Fate is as old as the world. Only, the moralists can't say that, because humanity would take fright.

CLAUDINE. Just as when there is an epidemic in the city the doctors must hide the truth. We are all too weak, we are not sufficiently armed for the battles of life.

VÉTHEUIL. Doubtless. It's all very well to have an exact knowledge of what is right and fitting, but nature endows creatures like us with sensuality and sensibility, and we are as a consequence capable of committing the worst sort of follies. It is a continual struggle.

CLAUDINE. Yes, but *we* have come

out of the struggle victorious. [*Smiling*] We come home like victors who have lost legs and arms.

VÉTHEUIL [*smiling*]. There is something else lacking, too!

CLAUDINE. Oh! We are not wounded now, we're completely cured! We *were* as unhappy as two human beings could be. Dear Georges, do you remember when we said good-by at Pallanza — that sky sprinkled with stars, the mountains in a shroud of mist — and our friend the fisherman singing "*Vorrei Morire*"?

VÉTHEUIL. He knew we were listening — the old — !

CLAUDINE. And that awful nasal tenor of his! I've sung the song many times since, the dear vulgar old tune! You were right then, everything turned out exactly as you said it would. That night we separated was so beautiful that my suffering became calm and peaceful. But it didn't happen all of a sudden — no! I used to cry myself sick, night after night — I was tired of everything!

VÉTHEUIL. My dear! But what did *they* say to you?

CLAUDINE. I gave vague reasons, foolish ones, or else none at all — they were satisfied. They were so good and affectionate, too! [*A pause*] He never suspected.

VÉTHEUIL. I'm glad of that!

CLAUDINE. But Denise! She understood as much as her little mind could carry. She guessed that it was because of you I suffered, that you were the cause of my tears. Do you know what she did to that big photograph of yours you gave me? She scratched the eyes out!

VÉTHEUIL. She's very advanced for her age!

CLAUDINE. She would have done the same to you in person, if she had been able.

VÉTHEUIL. She's a woman already.

CLAUDINE. You have no reason to complain!

VÉTHEUIL. I was only joking.

CLAUDINE. And now what are you going to do here in Paris? You will be very much in demand — fêted and asked everywhere. Think of it, an explorer! The young ladies will want to know how they make love in the desert —

VÉTHEUIL. I sha'n't go to receptions and all that. You see, when a man has lived eighteen months as I have, thi Parisian life is out of the questior Just now I was watching all those peopl in there — odious, hateful creatures! — and to listen to their conversation Grotesque pygmies! What ridiculou dolls they are, men and women alike They don't live — the way we did o that expedition. — Ah, what characte and energy those men had! When yo come to know them, you try to becom like them. No, I'm going away again to help colonize.

CLAUDINE. You're right, but it won' be very pleasant for you to be out ther all alone?

VÉTHEUIL [*rather nervously*]. sha'n't be all alone: I am going t marry — the sister of one of my com panions.

CLAUDINE. What? Why, you'v hardly been back a week! You'v made rather a hasty decision!

VÉTHEUIL. I've known her for ove a month. When we were on our wa home to France, she joined us at Saïgon and we came back together on the sam steamer.

CLAUDINE. Is she pretty?

VÉTHEUIL. Not so pretty as you.

CLAUDINE. Don't say that; in a few weeks you'll think her the pretties of women. You must have a photo graph of her with you?

VÉTHEUIL [*weakly*]. I have.

CLAUDINE. Then show it to me [*He shows her the photograph*] You ar right: she's not pretty, but she look sweet and energetic. You see, dear, don't feel at all jealous when I see thi picture, and if ever I meet the original I shall kiss her with all my heart.

VÉTHEUIL. How good you are!

CLAUDINE. Life *is* funny! When think how for months I did nothing bu cry and think of you — ! If I saw some one in the street who resembled you, my blood all rushed to my heart, turned pale, I had to support mysel to keep from falling — and now here you are telling me you are about t marry! I have perfect control ove myself; I am glad that I can give you my hand in perfect loyalty and friend ship and say I am truly happy!

VÉTHEUIL. You've always been adorable!

CLAUDINE. Well, we're cured, that' all —

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, it was inevitable — and it was good, because we separated

like loyal friends. It was terrible, the separation was bitter, but as the surgeons say, it was a clean wound. There was no danger of poisoning — hatred, that is, revenge, anger, the whole base procession of lies — !

CLAUDINE. It was a real duty, and that's a great consolation — the only consolation, I think. [*A pause*] Well, I, too, am going to be married.

VÉTHEUIL. You are?

CLAUDINE. Yes! A great many things have happened since you left.

VÉTHEUIL. I can well imagine!

CLAUDINE. The Countess de Ruyseux ran away with an officer a few weeks ago.

VÉTHEUIL. No?

CLAUDINE. True. Now Ruyseux considers himself free. He's secured a divorce and asked me to become his wife. At first I refused, but later I accepted. We're going to live in the country, on our estate, far from the city. We'll not return to Paris until Denise is eighteen.

VÉTHEUIL. Well, it's a pretty play: ends with two marriages!

CLAUDINE. Yes, but shall we be happy for ever after?

VÉTHEUIL. That's another play. Yet — since we are going to live on the prairies and in the woods, out with peaceful and wise old nature — yes, we shall be happy. Ah, if we remained here, in this city of turmoil and evil, we, playthings of passion that we are, should probably be tempted into some last adventure before the flame finally died down. Toward forty, you would fall in love with a youth who would cause you great suffering and break your heart —

CLAUDINE. Oh, please!

VÉTHEUIL. And I, toward fifty, might fall in love with some child who would lead me a merry chase and take me to new lands again!

CLAUDINE. *We* have seen enough!

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, when one has lived, and observed, he arrives at a true philosophy of life, and says that at the bottom of it all, happiness, or at least what seems most closely to resemble it —

[*At this moment, interrupting* VÉTHEUIL *in the midst of his sentence, a "Farandole," danced madly by a number of couples, sweeps into the room, and in its whirlwind wake carries off* CLAUDINE *and* VÉTHEUIL]

THE END

MONNA VANNA

(*1903*)

By Maurice Maeterlinck

MAURICE MAETERLINCK AND "MONNA VANNA"

I HAVE written a short sketch of Maurice Maeterlinck as an introduction to "The Blind", in my "Representative One-Act Plays by Continental Authors." I have also, in my biography, "Maurice Maeterlinck: A Study", included a special chapter on his "Dramatic Theory and Practise." The full-blooded vitality of "Monna Vanna" presupposes that one is familiar with the theories with which Maeterlinck started out to conquer the theatre — his insatiable desire to obliterate the actor, who constituted, to him, the element of disillusion, and always obtruded himself between the reader and the real play. Hence he framed a theatre for marionettes, and he wrote a series of plays, pale in their beauty, gossamer in their spiritual atmosphere, to illustrate what he meant by it. They are very beautiful, very fragile, half articulate, — and in their mystic quality, disconnected, moody, temperamental gaspings are most difficult to give. Even their stage directions are demanding of the impossible objectively; but they are such plays as the new scenic artist revels in, since they are saturated with just that intangible matter which the art critics speak of as presentative rather than representative medium. Then came the breaking of this theory — after the writing of several supremely haunting one-act dramas, and several longer ones; and there were many causes for this breaking up other than a practical contact with the theatre itself.

Maeterlinck has left far behind him the Jesuitical education he received at Sainte-Barbe, Ghent; and so likewise he has abandoned the law which he studied in early years, only to practise when some neighboring peasant came to him in need of an advocate. Those times are gone — and also are departed the days in Paris, when, as a young poet, he joined the hectic group of "Cymbalists", some of whom committed suicide under the strain of suppressed moods. From the days of the drooping mustache and the spelling of his name Mooris, to the later days when, much like a chauffeur with smooth-shaven face and in golf suit, Maurice Maeterlinck has evolved in philosophy, in stage technique, — in every way. And "Monna Vanna" illustrates what lack of prejudice there was in the artist who, in so short a time, could swerve so completely from pastel strokes to bold sweeps of live color in characterization.

"Inward perspectives" he once wrote, "disappear before the footlights"; and he was always striving inwardly for what the surface obscured for him. "A poem which I see on the stage seems to me always a lie," he declared, thus showing himself at the outset in no mood to deal with the conventional stage he found. Like Charles Lamb, he was on the side of the written word, not the spoken one. But the unseeable as theatrical material is difficult of handling, and Maeterlinck's peculiar contribution to modern drama lay in the very fact that he handled it with psychological intensity, — "Interior", "The Blind", "The Intruder" are striking illustrations of the effective use of the symbol, of the thing felt rather than seen, of the thing suggested rather than specified.

In "The Treasure of the Humble" one reads this oft-quoted passage:

"I have grown to believe that an old man, seated in his armchair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him; giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws

that reign about his house, interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of doors and windows and the quivering voice of the light, submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny — an old man, who conceives not that all the powers of this world, like so many heedful servants, are mingling and keeping vigil in his room, who suspects not that the very sun itself is supporting in space the little table against which he leans, or that every star in heaven and every fibre of the soul are directly concerned in the movement of an eyelid that closes, or a thought that springs to birth — I have grown to believe that he, motionless as he is, does yet live in reality a deeper, more human, and more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who conquers in battle, or 'the husband who avenges his honor.'"

Between this statement and the writing of "Monna Vanna" grows a steady realization that action as a measure of internal states of mind and soul is necessary to the theatre; that the static is an inconsistent term where interplay of motives and clash of wills are required to be shown objectively. The one does not prohibit the other, but the latter, to a degree, are essential.

But I believe Maeterlinck had in mind a static theatre which ignored the violences of action, as in "Othello", for instance, and set the mood of his audiences, creating for himself actively by the barest suggestion. The mural quality of his faintly limned figures would be nothing if the creative effect in the beholder were not active. There is a wide gulf between "Pelléas and Mélisande" and Dante's episode of Paolo and Francesca in "The Inferno" — yet they are the same legendary, or semi-historical love story. It cannot be said, however, despite the simplicity of the form adopted by Maeterlinck, that he did not make use of externals to produce internal effects. The violences of Nature in his marionette dramas are as continual as they ever were in the old-type romantic drama. He gave us shadows in the midst of turbulence.

Maeterlinck's marionette theatre was a success as well as a practical failure; it taught a philosophy of the theatre which might be compressed for the dramatist in a question which Maeterlinck himself once asked, "Does the soul only flower on nights of storm?" It taught likewise the limitations of such methods of treatment as the static drama called for. Maeterlinck's style in these early years was most easily satirized.

But gradually there came a change over him as regards the theatre of the intangible, as there was a shifting of belief in Destiny to a championship of the human will. He began to feel that in silence on the stage, characters ceased to be. And so, in "The Buried Temple", we find Maeterlinck writing:

"Dramas which deal with unconscious creatures, whom their own feebleness oppresses and their own desires overcome, excite our interest and arouse our pity; but the veritable drama, the one which probes to the heart of things and grapples with important truths, — our own personal drama, in a word, which forever hangs over our life, — is the one wherein the strong, intelligent, and conscious commit errors, faults, and crimes which are almost inevitable; wherein the wise and upright struggle with all-powerful calamity, with forces destructive to wisdom and virtue."

What is more, the dramatist's association with Madame Georgette Leblanc had a marked effect on his change of theatre philosophy. "Pelléas and Mélisande" was a little less weak than "The Princess Maleine", and a stronger negative was made of "Aglavaine and Sélysette" and "Ardiane and Barbe-Bleue." "Sister

Beatrice", — despite its miracle source, was deeper colored, — and "Monna Vanna" stood forth, a triumph of dynamic drama over static, a triumph as well for Madame Georgette Leblanc.

In "The Double Garden", Maeterlinck wrote:

"To penetrate deeply into human consciousness is the privilege, even the duty, of the thinker, the moralist, the historian, novelist, and to a degree, of the lyrical poet; but not of the dramatist. Whatever the temptation, he dare not sink into inactivity, become mere philosopher or observer. Do what one will, discover what marvels one may, the sovereign law of the stage, its essential demand, will always be, *action*."

And this is further emphasized in another paragraph:

"There are no words so profound, so noble and admirable, but they will soon weary us if they leave the situation unchanged, if they lead to no action, bring about no decisive conflict, or hasten no definite solution."

Side by side in this change from shadow to definiteness was the intensive expression of faith in his essays, and the marked strengthening of his dramatic technique. As Arthur Symons said, writing of "Monna Vanna", herein "the playwright has gained experience, the thinker has gained wisdom, but the curious artist has lost some of his magic." The play was published in 1902, the year after "Sister Beatrice." I have analyzed it and given its history in a chapter of my study previously referred to. (See "Maeterlinck's Moral Theatre.") Therein, the reader will find him expressing indebtedness to Browning's "Luria" for some of the atmosphere of "Monna Vanna"; he will also note the controversy over the English Reader of Plays, who censored the second act. The play was first produced at the Nouveau Théâtre, Paris, on May 17, 1902, and in English was given in New York on October 23, 1905. As an opera, with the music of Février, it was given by the Chicago Opera Company in New York, on February 17, 1914.

There are many vital angles from which to study Maurice Maeterlinck. His early period and friends embrace a vivid moment in the history of French literature; his mysticism which connects his name with Novalis, Ruysbroeck and Emerson; his treatment of Destiny; his concern about the spiritual world; his war mood — all these matters are themes for study. Yet, during his American visit, when it was my privilege to see him and talk with him, the charm of the external man — the boy of the open, the naïve wonder of a child — afforded a vivid contrast to the quiet philosopher penetrating the social profundities of the beehive, or sensing the intelligence of flowers, or establishing the existence of a spirit world and the phenomenon of spiritual communication. Here was a robust mystic. I recalled his portrait of earlier days. Once upon a time, during the Parnassian era, when Mallarmé was the fetish, and De l'Isle Adam was the inspiration, the Maeterlinck who wrote for magazines that bloomed and died in a night had a mystic melancholy to the eyes, which went with the temper of his verses, "Serres Chaudes." But now he is clean-shaven, broad-shouldered, silver-haired, with humor in the eyes. The dynamic theatre in more ways than one has changed him. I could well imagine him writing his essay on "The Fist." But with the writing of "Monna Vanna" there seemed to go from him a spiritual necromancy felt in "The Intruder" and "The Blind." "The Blue Bird" and "The Betrothal" — beautiful as they are, and Maeterlinckean in motive — are nevertheless wanting in the deeper spiritual presence which saved his marionette theatre from being an absurdity, and made of it a great influence in modern dramatic art.

MONNA VANNA

By MAURICE MAETERLINCK

TRANSLATED BY ALFRED SUTRO

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This version of "Monna Vanna" advances no claim to absolute literalness. It has been prepared for stage presentation; and certain expressions, perfectly inoffensive in the original, have been modified, brought into line with English ways of speech. There are words in our language that, to use Mr. Meredith's phrase, "for the sake of dignity, blush to be named," and such blushes may fitly be spared when a paraphrase is ready to hand. It remains only to be said that M. Maeterlinck's work, pure and lofty throughout, has been altered only at most immaterial points; and that no alteration whatever has been made without the full approval of the author.

CHARACTERS

GUIDO COLONNA, *Commander of the Pisan garrison*
MARCO COLONNA, *Guido's father*
PRINZIVALLE, *General in the pay of Florence*
TRIVULZIO, *Commissioner of the Florentine Republic*
TORELLO, BORSO, } *Guido's lieutenants*
VEDIO, *Secretary to Prinzivalle*
GIOVANNA (MONNA VANNA), *Guido's wife*

PERIOD — *The end of the Fifteenth Century.*

The first and third Acts take place in Pisa; the second outside the city.

COPYRIGHT, 1907,
BY DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY.

MONNA VANNA

ACT I

A Room in the Palace of GUIDO COLONNA.

GUIDO *and his lieutenants,* BORSO *and* TORELLO, *are standing by an open window, from which there is a view of the country around Pisa.*

GUIDO. Our present extremity is so great that the Seigniory have been compelled to reveal to me disasters they had long kept back. The two armies that Venice despatched to our relief are both hemmed in by the Florentines; the one at Bibbiena, the other at Elci. Chiusi, Montalone, the passes of the Vernia, Arezzo, and the defiles of the Casentine — these are all held by the enemy. We are isolated and helpless, given over to the hatred of Florence; and Florence is unforgiving when she no longer trembles. Our soldiers, the people, are still unaware of these disasters, but strange rumours are afoot, and daily becoming more definite. What will the Pisans do, when they learn the truth? Their rage will turn upon us, upon the Seigniory; we shall be the first to fall victim to their terror and blind despair. They have endured so much, during this long siege, that has lasted more than three months; they have borne their suffering so heroically, that it need not surprise us if famine and misery goad them now to madness. One hope was left to them; that is gone, and, with it, the last vestige of our authority. We shall be powerless. The enemy will batter down our walls, and Pisa cease to be . . .

BORSO. My men have shot their last arrow; their ammunition is spent. One may search the vaults from end to end without finding an ounce of powder . . .

TORELLO. We fired our last cannon ball two days ago at the batteries of Sant' Antonio; and even the Stradiotes, who now have nothing left but their swords, refuse to man the ramparts . . .

BORSO. From this window the breach can be seen that Prinzivalle's cannon have made in our walls . . . It is fifty paces wide; a flock of sheep could pass through . . . The place is untenable; and the Romagnians, the Sclavonians, and the Albanians have signified their intention to desert in a body should the capitulation not be signed to-night . . .

GUIDO. Thrice within the last ten days have the Seigniory sent ancients of the College to treat for capitulation. These have none of them returned . . .

TORELLO. Prinzivalle does not forgive us the murder of his lieutenant, Antonio Reno, whom the frenzied peasants hacked to death in our streets. Florence avails herself of this murder to proclaim us outside the law, and treat us as barbarians . . .

GUIDO. I have sent my own father to Prinzivalle to express our profound regret, and explain how powerless we were to control a mob whom hunger had driven frantic. My father was a sacred hostage. He has not yet returned . . .

BORSO. For more than a week now the city has lain open, and exposed on every side; our walls are a mass of ruin, our cannon silent. Why does Prinzivalle not give the order for assault? Can it be that his courage has failed him, or does he dread some ambush? Florence, perhaps, may have sent mysterious orders . . .

GUIDO. The orders of Florence are ever mysterious, but her designs are clear. Pisa, by her unswerving loyalty to Venice, has set a dangerous example to the little Tuscan cities; the Republic of Pisa, therefore, must cease to be . . . Florence has displayed rare artifice and cunning. She has contrived, little by little, to embitter this war, to poison it with strange acts of treachery and

cruelty, that shall be held to warrant her pitiless revenge. It is not without cause that I suspect her emissaries of having incited our peasants to massacre Reno. So, too, was it part of her scheme to entrust this siege to Prinzivalle, the most barbarous mercenary in her employ — the man who won for himself such sinister fame at the sack of Placenza, where he put every man who bore arms to the sword — though he declared later this was done against his orders! — and sold five thousand free women into slavery . . .

BORSO. Such is the report, I know, but it is not correct. It was not Prinzivalle, but the Florentine Commissioners, who were responsible both for the massacre and the sale. I have never seen Prinzivalle, but one of my brothers knew him well. He is of barbarian origin. His father would seem to have been a Basque or a Breton, who kept a goldsmith's shop in Venice. He is undoubtedly of humble birth, but still not the savage that people hold him. From what I hear he is a dangerous creature, of dissolute habits, fantastic and violent, but, for all that, loyal; and I would unhesitatingly hand him my sword . . .

GUIDO. Wait till your arm can no longer wield it! And very soon now he will be stirring, and show us what he is! In the meanwhile we have one chance left: such of us, at least, as dare to meet death bravely, and to look it in the face . . . We must tell the whole truth to the soldiers, the citizens, and the peasants who have found shelter in our walls. They shall learn that no offer of capitulation has been made to us; and that we have not here one of those mimic wars in which two great armies fight from dawn to sunset, leaving three wounded on the field; not a fraternal siege that ends by the victor becoming the guest and the cherished friend of the vanquished. This is a bitter struggle for life or death; a struggle in which no mercy is shown; in which our wives and our children . . .

[*Enter* MARCO. GUIDO *sees him and rushes eagerly to embrace him*]

GUIDO. Father! . . . By what happy miracle, what stroke of good fortune in this calamity of ours, have you been restored to us, when I had almost given up hope . . . You are not wounded? You drag your foot behind you! Have they tortured you? How did you escape? What have they done to you?

MARCO. Nothing. They are not barbarians, thank God! They received me as an honored guest. Prinzivalle had read my works; he spoke to me of the three dialogues of Plato, that I had found and translated. I am lame, it is true, but then I had far to go, and I am very old . . . Do you know whom I met in Prinzivalle's tent?

GUIDO. The merciless Commissioners from Florence!

MARCO. Yes, they were there — or, at least, one of them, for I saw only one . . . But the first name I heard was that of Marsilio Ficino, the man who revealed Plato to the world . . . Plato would seem to live again in Marsilio Ficino . . . I would have given ten years of my life to see him, before going whither all must go . . . We were like two brothers who had come together at last . . . We spoke of Hesiod, of Homer, Aristotle . . . Close to the camp, beside the banks of the Arno, he had unearthed, in a grove of olive, the torso of a goddess that had lain buried in the sand: it was so strangely beautiful that if you saw it you would forget the war. We dug on a little further; he found an arm, and I two hands . . . These hands were so pure, so delicate, they held such a radiant happiness, that one fancied them formed for naught else than to scatter the dew, or caress the dawn . . . One was curved tenderly, as though it had lain against a woman's breast; the other still clasped the handle of a mirror . . .

GUIDO. Father, father! Let us not forget that, here, people are perishing of hunger, and have little to do with delicate hands, or bronze torsos!

MARCO. This one is of marble . . .

GUIDO. Be it so! But let us speak rather of the thirty thousand lives to whom a moment's delay, a single imprudent act, spells ruin; whereas a word could save them: a whisper of good news . . . It was not for a torso or a mutilated hand that you went yonder! What did they say to you? What designs has Florence, or Prinzivalle? Tell us quickly! Why do they dally with us? Do you hear those cries underneath our window? The poor wretches are fighting for the grass that has grown between the stones . . .

MARCO. You are right. I was forgetting that men were at war with each other now that spring is here, and the glad sky smiling upon the earth, and the sea stretching towards the blue like a radiant cup that a goddess presents to the gods of heaven; and the earth so fair and so full of love for men! . . . But you have your joys; I dwell too long on mine . . . Besides, you are right. I should have told you at once the news that I bring . . . I bear a message fraught with salvation to thirty thousand lives, and with heavy affliction to one . . . But this one may find therein most noble occasion for glory, of a kind that seems greater to me than all the glories of war . . . Love for one person is good, and brings its own happiness; but the love that enfolds the many is greater and finer still . . . The virtues that all men admire are good; yet there come days when our eye travels beyond them, and then their value seems less . . . Listen! . . . And prepare yourself for what I have to say, lest my first words should wring from you one of those oaths that bar our retreat, and enchain the reason that fain would retrace her steps . . .

GUIDO [*dismissing his officers with a gesture*]. Leave us!

MARCO. No! Remain . . . It is our fate, the fate of us all, that we are about to decide! Indeed, I could wish that this room overflowed with the victims whom we shall save! That all the poor wretches to whom we bring comfort might be at the window there, to hear and retain for ever the tidings I bring; for I bring salvation, if reason will but accept it! Nor could ten thousand reasons turn the scale against one overpowering error, whereof I fear the weight the more, inasmuch as I myself . . .

GUIDO. Have done with enigmas, father, I entreat you! What can this matter be that calls for so many words? Tell us all! There is nothing can frighten us now!

MARCO. Be it so, then! Listen! I saw Prinzivalle; I have had speech with him . . . It is strange how false is the picture men draw of one whom they hold in dread . . . I went to him as Priam to the tent of Achilles. I thought to meet a drunken, bloodstained savage — a madman whose only quality was a certain talent for war . . . For as such had he always been represented to me . . . I expected to find the incarnate fiend of battle, headstrong and incoherent, vain, debauched, treacherous, cruel . . .

GUIDO. And all this is Prinzivalle, save that he be no traitor!

BORSO. Nay, traitor he is not; and, though he serve Florence, his loyalty is unstained . . .

MARCO. The man I met bowed down before me as though he were my disciple, and I the master whom he revered. He is learned, studious, wise, eager in search of knowledge. He listens patiently, and his eyes are open to all things that are beautiful. He is humane and generous, and has no liking for war; he is conscientious and sincere, the reluctant servant of a perfidious Republic. The hazards of life — destiny, it may be — made him a soldier, and hold him captive still to a glory that he detests, and fain would abandon, but not before he has gratified a desire; a fearful desire, such as would seem to fall on some men who are born beneath the perilous star of a great, unique, and unrealisable love . . .

GUIDO. Father, father, you forget that men who are dying of hunger can ill brook this delay! What are this man's qualities to us? You spoke of salvation; give us the word you promised!

MARCO. It is true. I do wrong to hesitate; for cruel as this thing may be to the two creatures I love best of all on this earth . . .

GUIDO. My share I accept, though it be what it may; but who is the other?

MARCO. Listen, I will . . . As I entered this room it seemed strange and difficult to me; and yet the chance of salvation was so overwhelming . . .

GUIDO. Speak!

MARCO. Florence is determined on our annihilation. The decemvirs of war have judged it necessary, the Seigniory have approved their decree; the decision is irrevocable. But Florence is too prudent, too wise in her hypocrisy, to allow the world that she is civilizing to lay the charge of indiscriminate bloodshed at her door. She will declare, therefore, that we refused the merciful capitulation she had offered. The city will be taken by assault; Spanish and German mercenaries will be hurled against her. And these need no urging, when there is chance of pillage or burning, of rapine or slaughter! A

mere matter of slipping the muzzle: and the leaders, that day, will take care to seem helpless, to have lost all control . . . Such is the fate held in store for us; and the city of the red lily will be the first to deplore the disaster, and will ascribe it wholly to the unforeseen license of the foreign mercenaries, whom she will disband with every expression of horror, so soon as our ruin shall enable her to dispense with their services . . .

GUIDO. Yes. That is the way of Florence . . .

MARCO. These are the private instructions that Prinzivalle has received from the Commissioners of the Republic. Day after day, through this last week, they have urged him to deliver the final assault. Hitherto he has delayed it under various pretexts. Further, he has intercepted letters wherein the Commissioners, who spy upon his every movement, accuse him of treachery to the Seigniory. Pisa destroyed, and the war over, condemnation, torture, and death await him in Florence, as they have awaited more than one dangerous general. So that he knows his fate . . .

GUIDO. Very well then, what does he propose?

MARCO. He is certain — as far, at least, as one can be certain where these shiftly savages are concerned — of a fair proportion of the archers, whom he himself enrolled. But, in any event, he has a bodyguard of a hundred men, who are devoted to him; and on these he can absolutely rely. His proposal is that all who may choose to follow him shall be brought into Pisa, and help to defend her against the army he will abandon . . .

GUIDO. It is not men we need; and these dangerous auxiliaries do not tempt us. Let him give us bullets, provisions, powder.

MARCO. He foresaw that his offer might appear suspicious to you, and perhaps be rejected. He will undertake, therefore, to pass into the city a convoy of three hundred waggons, laden with ammunition and food, that have just entered his camp.

GUIDO. How can he do this?

MARCO. I know not. The ways of war and politics are strange to me. But he does what he will . . . The Florentine Commissioners notwithstanding, he is absolute master in his camp so long as the Seigniory have not removed him from his command. And this they dare not do on the eve of victory, in the midst of an army that has faith in him, and already clutches its prey. Florence must wait her hour!

GUIDO. Good, I understand; he saves us that he may save himself. He seeks revenge. But this, I imagine, could be achieved in other fashions, and more skilfully too. What can his interest be in saving his enemies? Whither will he go, and what will become of him? What does he demand in return?

MARCO. The moment has come, my son, when words turn cruel and all-powerful, when two or three syllables suddenly borrow the force of destiny, and fasten upon their victims . . . I tremble when I think that the sound of my voice, the way in which I may say what has to be said, can cause so many deaths, or save so many lives . . .

GUIDO. Why do you hesitate? . . . The cruellest words can add nothing to such a misfortune as ours . . .

MARCO. I have told you that Prinzivalle seems wise; that he is reasonable, humane . . . But where is the man so wise as to have no moment of folly; so virtuous as never to have harboured some monstrous idea within him? . . . Are not our reason, our pity and justice, for ever at war with desire, with passion, with the madness that lies so near to our soul? . . . I, myself, have succumbed more than once, and I shall again, and so, perhaps, will you . . . For it happens thus with us all! A sorrow awaits you that should be no sorrow perhaps, could you consider it rightly . . . And I who see so clearly that this sorrow is out of all proportion to the wrong that will cause it, I, for my part, have made a promise still more foolish than is this foolish sorrow . . . And my foolish promise will be foolishly kept by the sage I fain would be; the sage who ventures to speak in the name of reason . . . Should you reject this offer, I have undertaken to return to the enemy' scamp . . . And what will await me there? Death and torture will probably be the reward of my absurd loyalty . . . And none the less I shall go . . . Tell myself as I may that I am merely tricking out folly in purple that I may delude myself, I still shall do the foolish thing I deplore; for I, also, lack the strength that he must possess who would listen to reason

alone . . . But I have not yet told you. Ah, see how I lose my thread, how I weave phrase after phrase, pile word upon word, to retard, be it ever so little, the moment that must decide! But I wrong you, perhaps, by my doubts . . . See them! This mighty convoy that my own eyes have beheld; these waggons laden with corn and wine and fruit; these flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, enough, and more than enough, to feed a people for weeks; these barrels of powder and bars of lead with which Florence may be overcome and prosperity brought back to Pisa; all these shall be introduced this very night into our city if you will send in exchange and deliver to Prinzivalle — and she shall return with the first rays of dawn — but he demands, in token of victory and submission, that she come alone, and clad only in her mantle . . .

GUIDO. Who? Who is to go? You have not told me . . .

MARCO. Giovanna.

GUIDO. What! My wife? . . . Vanna? . . .

MARCO. Yes, your Vanna . . . At last I have said it!

GUIDO. But, why Vanna? Are there not a thousand women?

MARCO. It is because she is the most beautiful, and he loves her . . .

GUIDO. He loves her! . . . Where has he seen her? He does not know her!

MARCO. He has seen her. He knows her, but would not say when or how . . .

GUIDO. But she, has she seen him? Where have they met?

MARCO. She has never seen him, or, at least, she does not remember . . .

GUIDO. How do you know this?

MARCO. She told me herself . . .

GUIDO. What!

MARCO. Before I came here to you . . .

GUIDO. And you told her?

MARCO. All . . .

GUIDO. What! you cannot have dared to hint at this infamous bargain?

MARCO. Yes . . .

GUIDO. And she said? . . .

MARCO. Nothing . . . Her face grew white: she left me . . .

GUIDO. Ah, she did well! . . . That was better perhaps than loading you with reproaches, and throwing herself at your feet . . . Yes, that was better . . . She turned white and left you . . . So would an angel have done; that is like Vanna . . . What was there to say? Nothing! And we, too, shall say nothing. . . . Come, my friends, we will return to the ramparts, and die, at least, since die we must, without staining ourselves with dishonour . . .

MARCO. Ah, Guido, the ordeal is terrible, I know! Now that the blow has fallen let us be patient, and give reason time to discriminate between duty and private sorrow! . . .

GUIDO. Duty! My duty is clear. Your monstrous offer entails one duty on me, and one duty alone. I need no time to reflect.

MARCO. And yet must you ask yourself whether you have a right to sacrifice a whole people; whether thousands of lives be not too high a price to pay . . . Did your happiness alone depend on this choice I could understand your preferring death; though to me who am near the end of life — to me who have seen many men and therefore much human sorrow, to me there can be no moral or physical evil that is not preferable to death, cold and horrible death, with its eternal silence . . . And here many thousands of lives are at stake; here your brothers in arms are concerned, their wives and children! . . . If you yield to a madman's frenzy, then the thing that seems monstrous to you shall be called heroic by those who come after. For they will judge with calmer eyes, with more justice, and more humanity . . . Believe me, nothing can equal the saving of life. Virtues, ideals, all that we know as honour and loyalty, are mere trifles compared with that . . . You would seek to pass through this ordeal like a hero, unstained; but it is wrong to believe that death is the loftiest peak of heroism . . . The most heroic deed is the one that costs us most, and death is often far easier than life . . .

GUIDO. Are you my father?

MARCO. Yes, and proud to be your father . . . In opposing you to-day I oppose myself also, and I should love you less did you submit too readily . . .

GUIDO. Yes, you are my father, you have given your proof; for you, too, shall choose death for your share; and since I reject this loathsome compact, you shall return to the enemy's camp, and there meet the fate that Florence reserves for you . . .

MARCO. My son, here I alone am

concerned — a feeble and useless old man, with few years to live, a man of no value to any — and therefore did I tell myself that I might still humour an ancient folly, nor struggle to do what I know should be done, if one indeed sought to be wise . . . I know not why I shall go yonder . . . My soul has remained too young in this old body of mine; and I belong to a time in which reason had little to say . . . But I regret that so many influences of the past should keep me from breaking a foolish promise . . .

GUIDO. I shall act like you . . .

MARCO. What do you mean?

GUIDO. I shall follow your example. I, too, shall remain faithful to those influences of the past that you now regard as absurd, though you fortunately still permit them to regulate your conduct . . .

MARCO. Where others are concerned I cast them from me; and since it appears that your soul demands my encouragement, demands the poor sacrifice of my word, then I renounce in my heart the fulfilment of my promise, and come what may, and decide as you will, I shall not return yonder . . .

GUIDO. Enough! There are things a son must not say to an erring father . . .

MARCO. Say what you would, my son: let your indignant words flow freely from your heart . . . I shall regard them as the token of your most legitimate grief . . . Words cannot alter my love for you . . . But, while cursing me, let reason and gentle pity take the place in your soul of the maledictions that leave it . . .

GUIDO. Enough: I will hear no more . . . Think; and try to consider what it is you would have me do. For at this moment it is you who are lacking in reason, in noble and lofty reason; you whose wisdom is troubled by the fear of death . . . Death does not frighten me . . . I can still remember the time when you enjoined courage upon me, before your own was weakened by age and the vain study of books . . . We are alone in this room. No one has beheld your pitiful weakness; and my two lieutenants and I will keep the secret that we shall, alas, not have to keep very long! We shall bury all this in our hearts; and now let us turn our thoughts to the final struggle . . .

MARCO. Nay, my son, buried it cannot be; for years, and the studies that you deem so vain, have taught me that it can never be right, whatever the reason, to bury the life of a single man; and though I indeed should no longer possess the courage that alone finds favour in your eyes, I still have another, less dazzling, perhaps, less highly esteemed by men, since it achieves less, and men admire most that which brings suffering to them . . . This will enable me to accomplish the rest of my duty . . .

GUIDO. And what may that duty be?

MARCO. I shall complete what I have so unsuccessfully begun . . . You were one of the judges, but not the only judge; and all those whose life or death hangs on this hour have a right to know their fate, and to be told upon what their salvation depends . . .

GUIDO. I do not understand you. At least, I hope I do not. You were saying . . .

MARCO. That on leaving this room I shall at once inform the people of the offer that Prinzivalle has made and you have rejected . . .

GUIDO. It is well! Now I understand. I regret that idle words should have brought us to this, as I regret also that your delusions should compel me to be wanting in the respect that is due to your age . . . But it is a son's duty to protect a deluded father against himself; and while Pisa stands I am master here, and the custodian of her honour . . . Borso and Torello, I entrust my father to your care, until such time as his conscience shall reawaken within him. Nothing has happened! . . . No one shall know . . . Father, I forgive you; and you will forgive me, too, when, at the last hour, you remember how you once taught me to become master of myself, and unafraid . . .

MARCO. I have no need to wait for the last hour in order to forgive you, my son . . . I should have acted like you . . . And you may imprison me, but not my secret; for that is free, and can no longer be stifled . . .

GUIDO. What is this? What is this you say?

MARCO. That at this very moment Prinzivalle's proposal is being discussed by the Seigniory . . .

GUIDO. The Seigniory! Who can have told them?

MARCO. I told them before I came here . . .

GUIDO. You! No. No, it is impossible! However great your fear, or the havoc that age has wrought in your heart, you cannot have delivered the one joy of my soul, my love, the purity and beauty of our wedded life, into the hands of strangers, of miserable shopkeepers, who would weigh and measure it as though it were salt or oil! . . . I cannot believe it . . . I shall not, till my own eyes have seen it . . . And then I shall look upon you, you the father whom I loved and thought I knew, whom I took as my model, I shall look on you with no less horror and hatred than I do on the vile and cowardly monster who has besmirched us to-day with all this infamy!

MARCO. You speak truly, my son. You do not know me; and for that I am to blame. When old age came upon me I did not tell you what I learned from it every day concerning life, and love, and the joys and sorrows of men . . . Had I acquainted you sooner with all that was passing in my heart, with all the vanities that were slowly departing, and the truths that were taking their place, then should I not be standing before you to-day like some unhappy stranger whom you are beginning to hate . . .

GUIDO. At least I rejoice that I did know you sooner . . . And as for the rest . . . it is not difficult to foretell what the Seigniory will decide. To save themselves they have only to sacrifice one man, and that is so simple! Such a temptation would force a nobler courage than one has the right to expect from these poor traders. And yet, let them beware! That is asking too much. That is more than they have a right to ask. I have shed my blood for them; by day and by night have I toiled and endured; through this whole long siege I have never spared myself. But that is enough: and I will do no more! Vanna is mine! She belongs to me, and I am yet in command! My Stradiotes will at least remain faithful; I have three hundred men who will listen to me alone, and turn a deaf ear to the counsels of cowards!

MARCO. You are in error, my son. The Seigniory of Pisa, the citizens whom you speak of so slightingly, before even knowing what their decision may be, have in this crisis given proof of an admirable nobility and courage. They have refused to owe their safety to the sacrifice of a woman's love; and as I left them and hastened to you, they were summoning Vanna, to tell her that they placed in her hands the fate of the city . . .

GUIDO. What! They have dared! In my absence, they have dared to repeat to her the foul words of that loathsome satyr! . . . My Vanna! . . . When I think of her tender face, that fires at a glance — of the shrinking modesty that makes her beauty lovelier still — my Vanna to have stood before these lecherous old men, these little pale-faced hypocritical traders, who have always looked upon her as something holy! "Go," they will have said to her, "go yonder, naked and alone, to the barbarian's tent! Do his bidding!" Ah, truly, it was noble indeed of them to have used no violence! They knew that I am still here. They ask *her* consent, you say! And mine — who will dare ask mine?

MARCO. Have I not done so, my son? And if you refuse me they will come in their turn . . .

GUIDO. Let them! Vanna will have spoken for us both . . .

MARCO. I trust that it may be so, and that you will accept her answer . . .

GUIDO. Her answer! Can you doubt it, you who know her, who have seen her every day since the one when, with smiles of love in her eyes, she first crossed the threshold of this very room, in which now you wish to sell her? You doubt her answer? . . .

MARCO. My son, each of us sees only in others what he sees in himself, and knows himself only to the extent of his own consciousness . . .

GUIDO. That is doubtless why I knew you so ill! But rather than that these eyes of mine should a second time be so cruelly deceived, I would pray God that they be closed for ever!

MARCO. They may be about to open, my son, beneath a very great light . . . I say this because I have noticed a certain strength in Vanna that you have not seen, and it is this that leaves me in no doubt as to what her reply will be . . .

GUIDO. You have no doubt! Ah, believe me, neither have I! And I accept her reply in advance, blindly, irrevocably! If it be not the same as mine, then have we both been deceived in each other, from the very first hour

unto this one of sorrow . . . And our love will have been a mere lie, that now crumbles to dust; and all I adored in her will have existed only in this poor credulous head of mine, in this poor faithful heart that knew of one happiness only and worshipped a phantom . . .

[*Cries of "Vanna, Vanna," arise from the crowd outside, at first as a murmur, and then growing louder and louder. The door, at back, opens, and* VANNA, *alone and pale, advances into the room, while men and women, who seem afraid to enter, try to hide themselves against the door.* GUIDO *sees her, and rushes towards her. He throws his arms round her and embraces her feverishly*]

GUIDO. My Vanna! . . . What have they done, what have they said to you! . . . No, no, do not tell me . . . I need only look into your eyes — there all is still pure and loyal, like a fountain that angels bathe in . . . Ah, those foolish men! They could harm nothing of what I loved; they have been like children who throw stones in the air, and imagine they can hit the sky . . . As they gazed into your eyes their words will have shrivelled on their lips . . . You had no need to answer — you will merely have looked at them . . . And then, between them and you, between their thoughts and yours, a lake will have sprung up, a limitless ocean of life and love . . . But see, there is one here, a man whom I call father . . . He sinks his head; his white hairs hide it . . . We must forgive him; he is old and blinded. We must be merciful; we must make a great effort; your eyes say nothing to him — he is so far from us! . . . He has become a stranger; our love has passed over his sad old age like an April shower that falls upon flints . . . Our love is nothing to him; it has all escaped him . . . He thinks that we love as they do who know not what the word means . . . He cannot understand, he needs words . . . Give him words; give him your answer!

VANNA [*approaching* MARCO]. My father, I shall go to-night.

MARCO [*kissing her brow*]. My daughter, I know . . .

GUIDO. What! What do you say?

VANNA. Guido, I shall go. I must; I must obey . . .

GUIDO. Obey? Obey whom? Tell me!

VANNA. I shall go to Prinzivalle's tent to-night . . .

GUIDO. To die with him, to kill him? That had not occurred to me. Yes, yes, I can understand that!

VANNA. Were I to kill him our city would not be saved . . .

GUIDO. What! You, you love him then! Since when do you love him?

VANNA. I do not know him; I have never seen him . . .

GUIDO. But you have heard. Yes, yes, you have heard, people have told you . . .

VANNA. Nothing. Some one said just now that he was a very old man . . .

GUIDO. He is not! He is young, he is handsome, much younger than I. God! had he asked anything else I would have gone to him, crawled on my hands and knees, to save our city! Or wandered away with her and spent the rest of our life, unknown and forgotten, begging for alms at the cross-roads! . . . But this, this! Never in the history of the world has a conqueror dared — [*Going to* VANNA *and flinging his arms round her*] Ah, Vanna, my Vanna, I cannot believe it! It is not your voice that I heard, but my father's and his alone! No, I have heard nothing; all is as it was . . . You shall tell me that I am mistaken, that your love, that all that was you, cried out, "No, no!" ashamed even at having to speak! . . . I tell you I have heard nothing, nothing · the silence has been unbroken . . . But, see, now you must speak . . . All are listening . . . No one has heard . . . All are waiting for the word you must say . . . Say it quickly, Vanna, that they may know you! Quickly! Declare our love, and dispel this dream . . . Speak the word I wait for, the word that must be spoken if all things are not to crumble in ruins around me! . . .

VANNA. O Guido, I know how hard it must be to bear . . .

GUIDO [*instinctively thrusting her from him*]. How hard it must be! You know, you know? Have I not to bear it all, I who loved? You never have loved me! No, I begin to see! What am I to make of all this? . . . You are glad to leave me; you love this man, who knows! Ah, but here I still am the master, say what they will! . . . And you think I shall stand calmly by and let these things be? Beneath this

room is a dungeon, a dark, cold dungeon, and there you shall stay while my Stradiotes keep watch, until such time as your heroism shall have cooled, and you learn where your duty lies . . . Take her away! . . . I have spoken; it is my command! Go, and obey!

VANNA. Guido, Guido, I need surely not tell you . . .

GUIDO. They do not obey! No one here to do my bidding! You, Borso, Torello, have your arms turned to stone? Can my voice not make itself heard! . . . You, down there, you others, who stand and listen, can you not hear me? I shout to them; they do not move . . . Take her away, I say! . . . Away, away! . . . Ah, I see what it is! They are afraid; they want to live — to live, that is all they care for! I must die that they may live; but not that way! . . . No, no, that were surely too easy . . . Here am I alone against the crowd, and I am to pay for it all . . . Why I, and not you! You all have wives! . . . [*Half drawing his sword and approaching* VANNA] And what if I prefer death to dishonour? . . . That had not occurred to you! . . . But, see, I have only to raise my hand —

VANNA. If your love bids you, Guido . . .

GUIDO. "If your love bids you!" Ah, yes, speak of love, you who never have known what it means! You, in whose soul there can never have been any love! Now as I look at you I see a desert — a desert where all is swallowed up, parched and dying . . . not even a tear, not a tear! . . . What was I, what was I to you? A man whose arms offered shelter, that was all! . . . Had you but for an instant . . .

VANNA. Guido, look at me, look at me! Can you not see? What shall I say to you, Guido? Have I words to tell what I feel? Let me speak but one single word and all my strength goes! . . . I cannot . . . I love you, I owe everything to you! . . . And yet I shall go; I must, I must . . .

GUIDO [*thrusting her from him*]. It is well! Go; get you hence! Go to him, I give you up. Go! You are mine no longer . . .

VANNA [*seizing his hand*]. Guido! . . .

GUIDO [*pushing her away*]. Ah, do not clutch at me with those warm, soft hands . . . My father was right; he knew you better . . . Father, here she is. This is your work, finish it now to the end . . . Lead her to this man's tent. I shall stay here and watch you go off together . . . But do not imagine that I claim a share in the bread and meat she will buy . . . There remains but one thing for me, and that you shall know very soon . . .

VANNA [*clinging to him*]. Guido, look at me; do not turn your eyes from me — that is too dreadful . . . Let me see your eyes, Guido . . .

GUIDO. See then! Look into my eyes, and read . . . Go! I know you no longer! Time presses — out yonder he waits: night is falling . . . Go! what have you to fear? I shall not kill myself. I am not mad; it is only when love is triumphant that reason totters, not when love crumbles . . . I have gazed into the very depths of love, ay, of love and fidelity . . . I have no more to say. No, no, unclasp your fingers; they cannot detain a vanishing love. All is over, finished, done with; there remains not a trace! . . . The past is engulfed, and the future too . . . Ah, yes, those pure white fingers, those noble eyes, those lips; there was a time when I believed. . . . Now nothing remains . . . [*Casting* VANNA'S *hands from him*] Nothing, nothing, less than nothing! Farewell, Vanna! Get you gone. Farewell . . . You go yonder? . . .

VANNA. Yes . . .

GUIDO. You will not return? . . .

VANNA. Yes, I shall return . . .

GUIDO. As to that, we shall see . . . Ah, we shall see . . . Who could have told me that my father knew her better than I! . . .

[*He totters, and clings to one of the marble columns.* VANNA *goes out slowly and alone, without another glance at him*]

ACT II

PRINZIVALLE'S *Tent*

Sumptuous disorder. Hangings of silk and gold. Arms and precious furs are strewn about the place. Great chests lie half open, revealing quantities of jewels and glittering stuffs. The entrance to the tent is from the back, through a heavy curtain. PRINZIVALLE, *standing by a table, is arranging documents, plans, and arms.*

[*Enter* VEDIO]

VEDIO. Here is a letter from the Commissioner of the Republic.

PRINZIVALLE. From Trivulzio?

VEDIO. Yes. Messer Maladura, the second Commissioner, has not yet returned.

PRINZIVALLE. The Venetian army, that threatens Florence from the Casentine, is probably offering unexpected resistance. Give me the letter. [*He takes it and reads*] He sends me the formal command, under penalty of immediate arrest, and for the very last time, to deliver the assault at dawn . . . It is well. The night, at least, is mine . . . Immediate arrest . . . Ah, how little they know! . . . Do they really imagine that stale, hackneyed words like these can bring terror to the man who awaits the unique hour of his life! . . . Threats, arrest, calumny, trial, judgment — what are all these to me? . . . They would have arrested me long ago, had they been able, had they dared . . .

VEDIO. Messer Trivulzio told me, as he gave me the letter, that he would follow. He desires to speak with you . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Ah, so he has made up his mind at last . . . Our interview will decide many things; and this wizened little scribe, who stands here for all the occult power of Florence, and yet dares not raise his eyes to mine; this wretched, pale-faced dwarf who hates me more than death, shall spend an hour he has not looked for . . . Grave orders must have reached him that he ventures to beard the monster in his den . . . What guards are at my door?

VEDIO. Two old soldiers of your Galician band. I thought I recognized Hernando, and the other, I believe, is Diego.

PRINZIVALLE. Good; they would obey me, those two, did I tell them to put all the saints of heaven in chains . . . It is growing dark; have the lamp lit. What is the time?

VEDIO. It is past nine.

PRINZIVALLE. Marco Colonna has not returned?

VEDIO. The sentries at the moat will bring him to you the moment he arrives.

PRINZIVALLE. He had been here ere this were my offer rejected . . . This hour decides; and it holds all my life, like the great ships with flowing sails that prisoners dream of, as they stare into the darkness around them . . . It is strange that a man should thus confide all his destiny, his brain, his soul, his joy and his sorrow, to a thing so frail as the love of a woman! . . . I could smile at it myself, were it not stronger than my smile . . . Marco does not return . . . She will come, therefore . . . Go, look for the beacon which declares her consent. . . . See whether the light be there that heralds the trembling footsteps of the woman who gives herself that the others may live, and saves me at the same time as she saves her people . . . No, stay — I will go myself. I have waited for this hour since my boyhood, waited and yearned; and no eyes but mine, not even those of a friend, must be the first to greet its coming . . . [*He goes to the entrance of the tent, flings back the curtain and looks into the night*] See, the light, Vedio, the light! See how it shines and flares into the blackness! . . . From the Campanile — that is well, that is as it should be . . . See how it pierces the gloom! . . . It is the only light that shines on the town . . . Ah, never yet has Pisa lifted to the skies so glorious a flower, waited for so long and with so little hope! . . . Ah, my brave Pisans! You shall hold festival to-night that will linger long in your annals; while I shall know a diviner joy than had I saved my native city . . .

VEDIO [*touching his arm*]. Let us return to the tent. Messer Trivulzio comes from yonder.

PRINZIVALLE [*coming back and dropping the curtain*]. That is so. We must still . . . The interview will be brief . . . [*He goes to the table and fingers the papers there*] Have you his three letters?

VEDIO. There are only two.

PRINZIVALLE. The two that I intercepted, and this evening's order . . .

VEDIO. Here are the first two. You are crumpling the other in your hand . . .

PRINZIVALLE. He is coming . . .

[*The* GUARD *raises the curtain*]

[*Enter* TRIVULZIO]

TRIVULZIO. Have you observed the strange light that appears to be flashing signals from the Campanile? . . .

PRINZIVALLE. You think they are signals?

TRIVULZIO. I have no doubt of it . . . I must speak with you, Prinzivalle.

PRINZIVALLE. Say on. Leave us, Vedio, but do not go far away; I shall want you.

[VEDIO *goes*]

TRIVULZIO. You are aware, Prinzivalle, of the high esteem in which I hold you. This, indeed, I have already proved to you more than once, but there is much besides of which you are ignorant; for the policy of Florence, which people term perfidious, though it be merely prudent, demands that many things should be concealed even from those whom she admits to her most intimate secrets. We all obey her profound orders; and each one of us must courageously support the weight of her mysteries, which are the emanation of her supreme intelligence. Let it suffice, then, that I tell you that I had a very good share in your election, notwithstanding your youth and unknown origin, to the command of the most magnificent army the Republic has ever put into the field; nor, indeed, has there ever been cause to regret this choice. But for some time now a party has been forming against you. I am not sure whether, in revealing this to you, I am not allowing the sincere friendship in which I hold you to infringe somewhat upon my duty. There are often occasions, however, when a too narrow clinging to duty may work more mischief than the very rashest generosity. Know, therefore, that you have enemies who accuse you most bitterly of indecision, vacillation, sloth. Others even go so far as to throw doubt upon your loyalty. Carefully framed slanders have been set on foot, which lend colour to these insinuations. They have produced a disastrous effect upon that section of the Assembly that already eyed you with disfavour. These have gone so far as to discuss your arrest, and your trial. Fortunately, I was advised in time. I hastened to Florence, and had no difficulty in opposing proof to proof. I stood surety for you. It remains for you now to justify my confidence, which has never for an instant wavered; for we are lost if you do not act. My colleague, Messer Maladura, is held in check at Bibbiena by the troops of the Venetian Provedi-tor. Another army is marching upon Florence from the North. The city is in danger. All may yet be well if on the morrow you deliver the assault for which we have waited so long. This will set free our finest army, as well as the only captain whom victory has never forsaken; and we shall be able to return proudly to Florence, amidst the pomp and triumph that shall turn your enemies of yesterday into your most fervent admirers and partisans . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Is this all you have to say to me?

TRIVULZIO. Very nearly; though I have passed over in silence the very real affection in which I hold you, which has indeed grown with every day of our intercourse. And this, notwithstanding the difficult position in which we are often placed by laws that seem contradictory; laws which demand that the authority of the general should at times — at moments of danger — be balanced by the mysterious power of Florence, whereof I am to-day the humble representative . . .

PRINZIVALLE. This order that I have just received was written by you?

TRIVULZIO. Yes.

PRINZIVALLE. By your own hand?

TRIVULZIO. Undoubtedly. Why this question?

PRINZIVALLE. These two letters — you recognise them?

TRIVULZIO. Perhaps. I know not; what do they contain? . . . I must first . . .

PRINZIVALLE. There is no need. I know.

TRIVULZIO. Are they the two letters you intercepted, as I hoped you might? . . . I see that the test was good.

PRINZIVALLE. You are not dealing with a child. Let us not fall back on such wretched tricks as these; or prolong an interview that I am eager to end, that, indeed, delays a reward which no triumph in Florence could ever equal! . . . In these letters you have most basely and falsely denounced every action of mine. Was this from pure malice, or to provide the treacherous avarice of Florence with the indispensable excuse for dealing cheaply with a victorious mercenary? . . . In these letters all things are distorted with so fiendish a skill, that there are moments when I doubt my own innocence. My every action has been disfigured, degraded, besmirched; and this from the

very first week of the siege, down to the hour when my eyes were opened — the fortunate hour when I resolved to justify your suspicions. I have had your letters carefully copied — I have sent them to Florence. I intercepted the answer. Your word is accepted, you are believed: the most readily inasmuch as you had been supplied with the theme of your accusation. I am judged, unheard; I am condemned to death . . . And I know full well that not all the innocence of the archangels could help me to escape from the damning proofs that you have provided . . . And therefore do I now spring forward, burst your puny chains, and take the initiative. Hitherto, I have been no traitor; but since these two letters fell into my hands I have been preparing your ruin. This night I shall sell you, you and your sorry masters; I shall deal you the cruellest, the most fatal blow that lies in my power. And I shall regard it as the noblest deed of all my life, thus to have humbled the one city that exalts treachery to a virtue, and seeks to govern the universe by means of fraud and hypocrisy, lies, ingratitude, and villainy . . . For this evening, thanks to me, Pisa, your ancient enemy, who prevents you, and shall prevent you, whilst her walls stand, from spreading corruption over all the world — this evening Pisa shall be saved, and shall lift her head to breathe defiance once more . . . Ah, do not rise, or make vain gestures . . . My measures have all been taken, and they are inevitable; you are in my power; and even as I hold you now do I seem to hold in my hand the destiny of Florence . . .

[TRIVULZIO *draws his dagger and aims a swift blow at* PRINZIVALLE]

TRIVULZIO. Not yet . . . Not while my hands are free . . .

[PRINZIVALLE, *warding off the blow with his arm, has thrown up the weapon, which strikes him in the face. He seizes* TRIVULZIO *by the wrist*]

PRINZIVALLE. I was not prepared for this spasm of terror . . . See, I hold you now, and can crush you with one hand . . . I have only to lower this dagger . . . It would seem already to be seeking your throat. What, you say nothing? Are you not afraid, then?

TRIVULZIO [*coldly*]. No; use the dagger, it is your right. I knew my life was forfeit.

PRINZIVALLE [*loosening his hold*]. Ah . . . But, truly, then, this thing is strange that you have done . . . And even very rare . . . There are not many soldiers who would so readily clasp the hand of death; and I should not have thought that within so feeble a body . . .

TRIVULZIO. You men of the sword are only too apt to believe that there is no other courage than that which dwells at the end of a blade . . .

PRINZIVALLE. You may be right . . . It is well . . . You are not free, but no harm shall be done you . . . We serve different gods, you and I. [*He wipes the blood from his face*] Ah, the blow was not unskilful . . . A little too hasty, but not lacking in vigour . . . It went within an ace of . . . And now, tell me, what would you do, if you held a man in your hands who had been so nigh despatching you to a world whither no one is anxious to go?

TRIVULZIO. I should not spare him.

PRINZIVALLE. I do not understand you . . . You are strange . . . Confess that it was a despicable thing to write those letters. I have shed my blood for Florence in three great battles; I have never spared myself, I have strained every nerve, the gain was all yours. I was a faithful servant to the Republic, nor did one single thought of disloyalty ever enter my heart . . . You must have known this, you who were always spying upon me . . . And yet, in your letters, some vile malice or hatred caused you to distort every action of mine, every step that I took. I thought only of Florence; you heaped slander on slander, and lie upon lie . . .

TRIVULZIO. The facts were fallacious — that mattered but little. It was for me to guard against the dangerous hour when the soldier, flushed by two or three victories, is on the point of no longer obeying the master he serves, whose mission is loftier than his. That hour had sounded, as this hour proves. The people of Florence held you too fondly. It is for us to shatter their idols. They show some resentment at the time, but they have created us that we may oppose their dangerous caprices; and it seemed to me that the hour had come to mark out their idol for destruc-

tion. I warned Florence. She knew what my falsehoods meant . . .

PRINZIVALLE. The hour had not come, and would never have come, but for your shameful letters . . .

TRIVULZIO. It might have come, and that was sufficient . . .

PRINZIVALLE. What! Is an innocent man to be sacrificed to a mere possibility? Offered up in cold blood to a danger that never might threaten?

TRIVULZIO. What is the life of one man to the safety of Florence!

PRINZIVALLE. You believe, then, in the destiny of Florence, in her work, her existence? She must be something, then, that I do not understand? . . .

TRIVULZIO. Yes, I believe only in her; the rest is nothing to me . . .

PRINZIVALLE. After all, it may be so . . . And you are right, since you believe . . . I have no country, I cannot tell. There are times when I regret that I have no country . . . But I have something that you never shall have — that no man ever has had as much as I . . . That atones for all . . . Go; let us part; we have no time to weigh these enigmas . . . We are far removed from each other, and yet there are points where we almost touch . . . Each man has his destiny . . . Some follow an idea, and others a desire; and it would be as hard for you to change your idea as for me to change my desire . . . Fare you well, Trivulzio; we go different ways . . . Give me your hand.

TRIVULZIO. Not yet. I shall give you my hand on the day of punishment . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Be it so; to-day you have lost; you will win to-morrow . . . [*He calls "Vedio!"*]

[VEDIO *comes in*]

VEDIO. Master! . . . What, you are wounded, the blood is flowing . . .

PRINZIVALLE. No matter . . . Summon the two guards. Let them take this man away; but see that they do him no injury . . . He is an enemy whom I love . . . Let them bestow him in some safe place, where no one shall see him . . . They answer for his safety, and shall set him free at my command . . .

[VEDIO *goes, leading* TRIVULZIO. PRINZIVALLE *stands before a mirror and examines his wound*]

PRINZIVALLE. The wound is not deep, but it has bitten into my face . . . Who could have thought that so feeble and haggard a man . . . [VEDIO *returns*] You have done as I bid you?

VEDIO. Yes. Master, this will mean ruin . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Ruin! . . . Ah, that I could be ruined thus each day to the day of my death! . . . Ruin, Vedio! . . . Why, never yet in this world will a legitimate revenge have brought to a man a happiness like mine — a happiness of which he has dreamed ever since he first learnt to dream . . . I have waited and prayed for it! I would have allowed no crime to stop me, for it was mine, it belonged to me, and I was bound to have it; and now that my star, urged on by justice, by pity, sends it to me, upon its silvery rays, you speak of ruin! . . . Oh, poor men with cold hearts! . . . Poor men without love! . . . Do you not know, then, that at this moment my destiny is being balanced in the sky, and that they are granting me the share of a hundred lovers, the share of a thousand joys! . . . Ah, I know it! . . . I touch the moment when those marked out for grand disaster or triumph suddenly find themselves on the topmost peak of their life, where all things belong to them and obey them, and become moulded to their hand! . . . And what matters the rest, and all that comes after! . . . There is an ecstasy too great for man, and it crushes him who achieves it! . . .

VEDIO [*approaching him with a linen bandage*]. The blood still flows; let me bind up your face.

PRINZIVALLE. Yes. Since it must be . . . But see that your bandages do not cover my eyes. [*Looking into the mirror*] Ah, I seem more like a patient shrinking from a surgeon's knife than a lover who soon will be joyfully welcoming his love! . . . [*He shifts the bandage*] And you, Vedio, my poor Vedio, what will become of you?

VEDIO. Master, where you go I go too . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Nay, you must leave me . . . I know not whither I shall go, nor what will become of me . . . Do you make good your escape: none will follow you, whereas if you go with your master . . . In these coffers is gold; take it, it is yours, I need it no longer . . . Are the waggons ready, the flocks all gathered?

VEDIO. They are in front of the tent.

PRINZIVALLE. Good. When I give the signal you will do what has to be done. [*The sound of a gunshot is heard from afar*] What is that?

VEDIO. A shot has been fired at the outposts.

PRINZIVALLE. Who gave the order? . . . It must be a mistake . . . If they should have fired at her! Did you not tell . . .

VEDIO. Yes. It is impossible. I placed a number of guards there, who will bring her to you the moment that she arrives.

PRINZIVALLE. Go and see.

[*Exit* VEDIO]

[*For a moment* PRINZIVALLE *remains alone.* VEDIO *returns, raises the curtain at the entrance, and murmurs "Master." Then he withdraws and* MONNA VANNA, *wrapped in a long mantle, appears, and pauses on the threshold.* PRINZIVALLE *trembles, and moves toward her*]

VANNA [*in a stifled voice*]. I have come as you bade me . . .

PRINZIVALLE. There is blood on your hand; are you wounded? . . .

VANNA. A ball touched my shoulder . . .

PRINZIVALLE. What? When? . . . This is terrible . . .

VANNA. As I drew near the camp.

PRINZIVALLE. Who fired the shot? . . .

VANNA. I know not; the man fled.

PRINZIVALLE. Are you in pain? . . .

VANNA. No.

PRINZIVALLE. Shall I have the wound dressed?

VANNA. No. It is nothing. [*A moment's silence*]

PRINZIVALLE. Your mind is made up? . . .

VANNA. Yes.

PRINZIVALLE. Shall I remind you of the conditions?

VANNA. There is no need.

PRINZIVALLE. You have no regrets? . . .

VANNA. Was it stipulated that I should come without regrets?

PRINZIVALLE. Your husband consents? . . .

VANNA. Yes.

PRINZIVALLE. There still is time if you wish to renounce . . .

VANNA. No.

PRINZIVALLE. But why are you doing this?

VANNA. Because out yonder they perish of hunger, and to-morrow a still swifter death would await them . . .

PRINZIVALLE. There is no other reason?

VANNA. What other could there be? . . .

PRINZIVALLE. I can conceive that a virtuous woman . . .

VANNA. Yes.

PRINZIVALLE. One who loves her husband . . .

VANNA. Yes.

PRINZIVALLE. Deeply?

VANNA. Yes.

PRINZIVALLE. You are clad only in your mantle?

VANNA. Yes.

PRINZIVALLE. You have seen the chariots and flocks in front of the tent?

VANNA. Yes.

PRINZIVALLE. There are two hundred waggons filled with the best Tuscan wheat; two hundred others laden with forage, and with fruit and wine from Sienna. There are thirty more filled with German powder, and fifteen smaller ones laden with lead; and around them are six hundred oxen from Apulia, and twelve hundred sheep. They await your order to march into Pisa. Would you care to see them start?

VANNA. Yes.

PRINZIVALLE. Come then to the door of my tent.

[*He raises the tapestry, gives the order, and makes a signal. A sound is heard as of a vague and mighty movement. Torches are kindled and waved to and fro. Whips are cracked and waggons creak. There is the bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen.* VANNA *and* PRINZIVALLE, *erect on the threshold of the tent, watch for a moment the enormous convoy as it starts forth, with torches flaming in the starry night*]

PRINZIVALLE. From this night, thanks to you, Pisa will cease to be hungry. She is invincible now, and to-morrow will know the glory of a joy and triumph for which none had dared any longer to hope . . . Are you satisfied?

VANNA. Yes.

PRINZIVALLE. Let us close the tent then; and give me your hand. The

evening is still mild, but the night will be cold. You have no weapons concealed about you, no poison?

VANNA. I have only my sandals and this mantle. Search me if you are afraid . . .

PRINZIVALLE. It is not for myself that I fear, but for you . . .

VANNA. I place the life of my people high above all . . .

PRINZIVALLE. It is well, and you have done right . . . Come, sit here. . . . It is a warrior's couch, rugged and fierce, narrow as a tomb, and but little worthy of you . . . Lie here, on these tiger-skins, that have never yet felt the gentle touch of a woman . . . Place this soft fur at your feet . . . It is the skin of a lynx that an African monarch gave me on the night of a victory . . .

[VANNA *sits, closely wrapped in her mantle*]

PRINZIVALLE. The light of the lamp is falling on your eyes; shall I move it?

VANNA. It matters not . . .

PRINZIVALLE [*kneeling at the foot of the couch and seizing* VANNA'S *hand*]. Giovanna! . . . [VANNA *starts up in surprise and looks at him*] Oh, Vanna, my Vanna . . . for I, too, used to call you thus . . . Now I tremble as I speak your name . . . It has so long remained trebly sealed in my heart that it cannot escape without breaking its prison . . . Indeed, it is my heart, it is all I have . . . In each one of its syllables lies all my life, and as I pronounce them I feel my life flow from me . . . It was familiar to me; I thought I knew it; I had said it again and again to myself, until I ceased to be afraid: I had spoken it every hour of every day, like a great word of love that one yearns to utter, if it be only once, in the presence of her whom it has so long evoked in vain . . . I thought that my lips had shaped themselves to its form; that at the long-sought-for moment they would pronounce it so softly, so meekly, so humbly, with so profound and mighty a yearning, that she who should hear it would know the distress and the love that it held . . . Whereas to-day it is merely a shadow. It is no longer the same . . . My fears and sorrows have bruised it and crushed it, and I can scarcely recognise it as it leaves my lips. All the meaning and adoration that I have placed within it come now to break my strength and extinguish my voice . . .

VANNA. Who are you?

PRINZIVALLE. You do not know me? . . . I recall no memory? . . . Ah, the marvels that time effaces! . . . But it is true that I alone had seen those marvels . . . And it is better, perhaps, that they should be forgotten . . . I shall hope no longer, I shall have fewer regrets! . . . No, I am nothing to you . . . A poor wretch, who for one single instant wistfully gazes at what has been the aim of his life; an unhappy man who asks nothing, who knows not even what it is he should ask; and yet he would, were it possible, to him, tell you before you go of what you have been to him, and will be, to the very end of his life . . .

VANNA. You know me then? . . . Who are you? . . .

PRINZIVALLE. You do not remember the man who is looking at you now, as, in a fairy world, one would look at the very source of one's joy and existence? . . .

VANNA. No . . . At least I do not believe . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Yes, you have forgotten . . . And I was sure, alas, that you had forgotten! . . . You were eight years old and I twelve when I met you for the first time . . .

VANNA. Where? . . .

PRINZIVALLE. At Venice, one Sunday in June . . . My father, the old goldsmith, brought your mother a necklace of pearls. She was admiring the necklace — I strayed into the garden . . . I found you there, by the side of a pond, in a grove of myrtle . . . A slender golden ring had fallen into the water . . . You were crying on the bank . . . I sprang into the pond . . . The ring was glittering on the marble basin; I seized it and placed it on your finger . . . I was nearly drowned . . . But you kissed me and were happy . . .

VANNA. It was a fair-haired child named Gianello. Are you Gianello?

PRINZIVALLE. Yes.

VANNA. Who could have recognised you? . . . And besides, your face is covered with bandages . . . I can only see your eyes . . .

PRINZIVALLE [*shifting the bandages*]. Do you know me now that I move them?

VANNA. Yes, perhaps . . . I seem to . . . For your smile is still that of a

child . . . But you are wounded, the blood is flowing . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Ah, it is not my first wound . . . But that any one should have hurt you . . .

VANNA. Let me adjust your bandage, it is badly tied. [*She winds the linen round his cheek*] I have often tended the wounded in this war . . . Yes, yes, I remember . . . I can see the garden again, with its pomegranates, its roses and laurels. We played there more than once, in the afternoon, when the sun shone hot on the sand . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Twelve times in all — I kept count . . . I can tell you each game that we played, and every word that you said . . .

VANNA. Then, one day, I remember, I waited — for I loved you well, you were so solemn, so quiet, and treated me like a little queen . . . But you never came back . . .

PRINZIVALLE. My father took me to Africa . . . There we got lost in the desert . . . Then I was taken prisoner by the Arabs, the Turks, the Spaniards — that was my life. When I saw Venice again your mother was dead; the garden lay waste . . . I sought you in vain . . . Till, at last, I heard of you, thanks to your beauty, which no man could ever forget who once had beheld it . . .

VANNA. You knew me at once when I came in?

PRINZIVALLE. Had ten thousand women come into my tent, every one with a face like yours and clad alike and equally beautiful, ten thousand sisters whom their own kindred could not distinguish, I should have risen and taken you by the hand and said, "This is she.". . . It is strange, is it not, that an image one loves should thus be able to dwell in the heart; for in this heart of mine yours lived so profoundly that it grew and it changed . . . It was different to-day from what it was yesterday; it blossomed, it became more beautiful; and the years adorned it with the gifts they bring to the budding child . . . And yet, when I saw you again, it seemed at first as though my eyes deceived me . . . My memory, that had so faithfully treasured your beauty, had yet been too timid, too halting; it had not dared to endow you with all the glory which so suddenly flashed on my sight. I was like a man who remembers a flower he has only seen once as he crossed the garden in twilight and suddenly beholds a hundred thousand flowers beneath the radiant light of the sun . . . You came in, and I saw the brow again that I knew so well, the hair, and the eyes; I saw the soul in the face I adored . . . But its beauty humbled the one that I had been silently storing for days and days, and months without end, and year after year — the beauty that had fed on a halting memory, and fallen so immeasurably short of the real . . .

VANNA. Yes, you loved me as one loves at that age; but time and absence throw a glamour over love . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Men often say they have loved only once in their life, but it rarely is true . . . To disguise their indifference, or their desire, they lay claim to the wonderful sorrow of those who were born for a single love; and when one of these tries to tell of the deep and the dolorous truth that has furrowed his life, the words that the fortunate lovers have used so freely have lost all their strength, all their gravity: and she who listens will unconsciously degrade the poor sacred words, often so full of sadness, to the trivial, playful meaning they have for the majority of men . . .

VANNA. I shall not do that. I can understand the love for which we all yearn when our life begins; the love we renounce because years — although mine are few — put an end to many things . . . But, tell me, when you passed through Venice again and had found trace of me — tell me what happened then? You made no effort to see the woman whom you had loved so deeply? . . .

PRINZIVALLE. At Venice I learned that your mother was dead, that her fortune was lost, and that you were about to marry a great Tuscan noble, the richest and most powerful of all in Pisa, to whom you would be as a queen, adored and happy . . . I was an adventurer without a home, without a country — what was there that I could offer? . . . Destiny seemed to demand the sacrifice I grudgingly made to my love. Ah, how often have I wandered around the walls of this city, and clung to the chains of the gate, in my fear lest my longing to see you should overwhelm me, and disturb the love and the happiness that you had found . . . I hired out my sword, I engaged

in two or three wars; I was a mercenary, and my name became known . . . I waited for the days to come, though hope had left me; till at last Florence despatched me to Pisa . . .

VANNA. How feeble and cowardly men become when they love! . . . Understand me well; I do not love you, nor can I tell whether I could ever have loved you . . . But it makes the very soul of love leap and cry in my heart when I find that a man who pretended to love as I might myself have loved, had not more courage in the face of love . . .

PRINZIVALLE. It was not courage that failed me . . . I had need of more than you think to be able to go . . . But it was too late . . .

VANNA. It was not too late when you left Venice. When one finds a love that fills a life, it never can be too late . . . Such a love never renounces. Expecting nothing, it hopes. And it persists, still, when it has ceased to hope. Had I loved as you say you loved, then I would have . . . Ah, one cannot say what one would have done . . . But this much I know: fate should not have wrenched my happiness from me without a struggle . . . I should have cried to fate, "Hence, hence, I pass here!" . . . I should have forced the very stones to side with me! And whatever the cost, the man whom I loved should have learnt of my love, and himself have pronounced the sentence, and pronounced it more than once! . . .

PRINZIVALLE [*seeking her hand*]. You do not love him, Vanna?

VANNA. Whom?

PRINZIVALLE. Guido.

VANNA [*withdrawing her hand*]. Do not take my hand. I cannot give it to you. I see I must make myself clear. When Guido married me I was alone, almost poor; and the woman who is alone and poor soon falls victim to calumny, especially if her face be fair, and she scornful of artifice or falsehood, . . . To these calumnies Guido paid no heed; he had faith in me, and his faith pleased me. He made me happy; at least as happy as one can be when one has renounced the vague and extravagant dreams which seem beyond human life; and almost hope to convince you, too, that one can be happy without spending one's days in search of a happiness that no man ever has known. I loved Guido to-day with a love less strange than the one you imagine you feel; but mine, at least, is steadier, calmer, more faithful, and more sure . . . That is the love that fortune has given me; I accepted it with my eyes open; I shall have no other; and if anyone breaks it that one will not be I . . . So you see you have misunderstood me . . . When I tried to point out to you what I thought was an error of yours, it was not of you that I spoke, it was not of us: I spoke in the name of a love of which a glimpse descends on the heart at the very first dawn: a love which exists, perhaps, but that is not mine or yours; for you have not done what such a love would do . . .

PRINZIVALLE. You judge me harshly, Vanna, or rather this love of mine. You judge it with all too little knowledge of what it has done, and had to suffer, in order to bring about this one happy moment that would most surely plunge every other love into despair . . . But though it had done nothing, and attempted nothing, I know of its existence, I who am its victim, whose life it has seized: I who bear it within me, and have lost all that makes for the joy and glory of man! . . . Ah, believe me, Vanna, and you must believe me, for I am of those who ask for nothing and hope for nothing! . . . You are in my tent now, and at my mercy . . . I have only to say a word, to stretch out my hand, and all is mine that the ordinary lover demands . . . But you know as well as I that the love of which I have spoken craves other things; therefore I ask that you no longer doubt me . . . I took your hand because I thought you would believe me . . . I shall not touch it again, my lips shall not press it; but, at least, Vanna, when we shall part to meet no more, at least know what kind of love mine has been, that it halted only before the impossible!

VANNA. From the moment that it could regard anything as impossible, is not doubt permitted? I demand no superhuman ordeals, no terrible obstacles to be overcome. I ask for no proofs of this kind, I am only too willing to believe . . . Indeed, it is for the sake of your happiness, and mine, that I still would try to doubt . . . In a love as mighty as yours there is something sacred, that could not but disturb the coldest of women . . . And therefore

do I probe into what you have done, and should be almost happy could I discover nothing that bears the stamp of this mortal passion, on which fate so seldom smiles . . . And I should have been convinced that I had found nothing, but for this last act of yours; for when I remember that you have madly wrecked your future, your fame, all that you have in the world, to bring me here for an hour beneath this tent, then am I forced to admit that possibly your love may be what you say . . .

PRINZIVALLE. This last act is the only one that proves nothing . . .

VANNA. How? . . .

PRINZIVALLE. I prefer that you should know the truth. In causing you to come to me here, in saving Pisa in your name, I have sacrificed nothing.

VANNA. I do not understand . . . Have you not betrayed your country, effaced your past services, ruined your future? What stands before you? Is it not exile or death?

PRINZIVALLE. In the first place I have no country. Otherwise, had my love been never so great, I should not have betrayed it for that love . . . But I am only a mercenary, faithful when others are faithful, a traitor when they betray . . . I have been falsely accused by the Florentine Commissioners, and condemned without trial by a Republic of merchants, whose ways you know as well as I. I was aware that I was lost; and the thing I have done to-night, far from hastening my ruin, will perhaps save me, if that still be possible . . .

VANNA. So what you have sacrificed for my sake counts but little?

PRINZIVALLE. It counts nothing at all . . . I could not but tell you. I should have no joy in a smile of yours that I had purchased with a lie . . .

VANNA. Ah, Gianello, Gianello, this is worth more than love and its noblest proofs! . . . You need no longer seek the hand that fled from you before. Take it . . .

PRINZIVALLE. I had rather that love had won it! . . . But what matter, after all! . . . It belongs to me, Vanna: I hold it between mine, I drink its fragrance, I live its life, it is one with me — I lose myself for a moment in the sweet illusion . . . Ah, the dear hand! I open it, close it, as though it could answer me in the secret, mysterious language of lovers; I press my kisses upon it, and you still let it lie here . . . You forgive me, then, the cruel ordeal to which I exposed you? . . .

VANNA. I should have done the same thing; better, perhaps, or worse, had I been in your place . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Did you know who I was when you agreed to come to my tent? . . .

VANNA. No one knew. There were strange rumours. . . . According to some, Prinzivalle was a horrible old man; others declared him a young prince of marvellous beauty . . .

PRINZIVALLE. But Guido's father saw me; did he say nothing? . . .

VANNA. No.

PRINZIVALLE. You did not question him? . . .

VANNA. No.

PRINZIVALLE. But did your heart not fail you when you came in the night, helpless, to the tent of an unknown savage? . . .

VANNA. The sacrifice had to be made . . .

PRINZIVALLE. And when you saw me?

VANNA. At first the bandages hid your face . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Yes, but afterwards, Vanna, when I raised them?

VANNA. Then it was different, and I already knew you . . . But you, when you saw me enter the tent — what was in your mind then; what had you intended to do? . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Ah, how can I tell! . . . I knew I was lost, I had the wild craving to drag all things down with me . . . And I hated you because of this love of mine! I marvel now at myself when I think of it . . . There needed but a word that was not yours, a gesture different from your gestures, to unchain the brute within me and fan my hatred . . . But the moment I saw you I realised how impossible it was . . .

VANNA. So did I realise it, too, and all fear left me, for we understood each other without a word being said. And it is all very strange . . . I should have done this thing, too, I believe, had I loved like you . . . Indeed, there are moments, as I listen to you, when I fancy that I am speaking, and that your words are my words, and you hearing what I am saying . . .

PRINZIVALLE. I, too, Vanna, I felt at once that the wall which divides us

from all other beings was growing transparent; it was as though I had plunged my hands into a flowing stream, and withdrawn them sparkling with light, shining with confidence and sincerity . . . And it seemed to me that men were changed, that all I had hitherto thought had been wrong . . . Most of all did I feel that I myself was changed, emerging at last as from a long imprisonment; that the gates were opening, flowers and leaves entwining around the bars; that the snows were melting on the far horizon, and the pure air of the morning entering my soul and breathing upon my love! . . .

VANNA. In me, too, there was a change. I was surprised to find myself speaking to you as I did from the very beginning . . . I am habitually silent . . . I have never spoken thus to any man, save it be to Marco, Guido's father, and even with him it is different . . . He is wrapped in a thousand dreams; our conversations are rare . . . and, as for the others, there is always a look in their eyes that chills me. How dare I tell them I love them, or that I yearn to know what is passing in their heart? . . . Your eyes do not repel, they do not alarm . . . I felt at once that I knew you, though I could not recall where it was I had seen you before . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Could you have loved me, Vanna, had my evil star not brought me to you when it was too late? . . .

VANNA. Were I to tell you that I could have loved you, it would be the same as my telling you that I love you now, Gianello, and you know as well as I that cannot be . . . But we speak to each other here as though we were on a desert island . . . Were I alone in the world there would be no more to say . . . But we forget the suffering that another endures, while we two smile at the past . . . When I think of Guido's sorrow as I left Pisa, the despair in his eyes, his haggard face — oh, I can wait no longer! . . . Dawn must be close at hand, and I am so eager to know! . . . I hear a footstep, some one is passing the tent . . . People are whispering behind the curtain . . . Listen, listen! . . . What is it?

[*The sound of whispers and hurried footsteps is heard outside the tent. Then the voice of* VEDIO *from without*]

VEDIO [*off*]. Master!

PRINZIVALLE. It is Vedio. Come in! Well?

VEDIO [*at the entrance of the tent*]. Quick, quick! Master, you must fly! Lose not an instant! Messer Maladura, the second Commissioner of Florence . . .

PRINZIVALLE. He was at Bibbiena . . .

VEDIO. He has returned . . . Six hundred Florentines are with him . . . I saw them pass. The camp is in uproar . . . He brings orders . . . He proclaims you traitor . . . He now seeks Trivulzio, and if he should find him while you are still here . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Come, Vanna . . .

VANNA. Whither shall I go?

PRINZIVALLE. Vedio, with two men on whom I can rely, shall escort you to Pisa . . .

VANNA. And you, what will you do?

PRINZIVALLE. I know not, and it matters little. The world is wide enough — I shall find shelter.

VEDIO. Oh, master, beware! They hold the country all round the town, and Tuscany is full of spies . . .

VANNA. Come to Pisa.

PRINZIVALLE. With you? . . .

VANNA. Yes.

PRINZIVALLE. I cannot . . .

VANNA. If only for a few days . . . to put them off the scent . . .

PRINZIVALLE. What will your husband do? . . .

VANNA. He will not fail in his duty to a guest . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Will he believe you when you tell him? . . .

VANNA. Yes . . . — If he did not believe me . . . But he will, he must . . . — Come . . .

PRINZIVALLE. No.

VANNA. Why? — What do you fear?

PRINZIVALLE. It is for you that I fear . . .

VANNA. For me? For me the danger is the same whether I be alone or with you. It is for you we must fear, for you who have saved Pisa; now it is right that Pisa should save you . . . You come under my protection, and I stand surety for you . . .

PRINZIVALLE. So be it: I will go with you . . .

VANNA. You could give me no better proof of your love . . . Come. Let us lose no time . . . Throw open the tent . . .

[PRINZIVALLE, *followed by* VANNA, *moves to the entrance and throws the tapestry wide open. There is a vast murmur of voices and clashing of arms; but above all is heard the sound of distant bells, pealing joyfully, that burst sharply upon the silence of the night. Far away in the distance Pisa is seen on the horizon, brilliantly illuminated. Great bonfires throw a mighty glare on the dark sky*]

PRINZIVALLE. Look, Vanna, look!

VANNA. What is it, Gianello? . . . Oh, I understand! . . . These are the fires of joy that they have kindled, to celebrate what you have done . . . The walls are aglow, the ramparts glitter, the Campanile shines like a torch of gladness. See how the radiant towers are whispering to the stars! . . . And the very streets are reflected in the sky: I can recognise the road I trod this evening! . . . There is the piazza with its dome of fire; and the Camp Santo, that makes an island of shadows! . . . One could almost imagine that life, but now at its very last gasp, had rushed back to Pisa, leaping from spire to spire, flinging itself across the skies, flooding the walls, the whole country, and now making signals to us, and calling us back . . . Listen, listen! . . . Hark to the shouts, the ecstasy, the delirium, rising and swelling, as though the sea were invading Pisa! . . . Hark to the bells, the bells that sound as they did at my wedding . . . Ah, I am happy, happy, and happiest of all to owe my happiness to you, to you who have loved me best! . . . Come, my Gianello! [*She kisses him on the brow*] That is the only kiss I can give you . . .

PRINZIVALLE. Oh, my Giovanna, it is the most exquisite kiss that love could hope for! . . . But see, you tremble; your knees bend under you! . . . Come, lean on me, put your arm round me . . .

VANNA. It is nothing: I am faint — I have overtaxed my strength. Help me, carry me! Let nothing hinder my first happy steps . . . How beautiful is the night beneath the wakening dawn! . . . Quick! Let us hasten, it is time. We must arrive before the joy has faded . . .

[*They go out together*, PRINZIVALLE *supporting* VANNA]

ACT III

State Apartment of GUIDO COLONNA. *Lofty windows, porticos, marble columns, etc. To the left, at back, a terrace, the approach to which is by a great double staircase. On the balustrade of the terrace are huge vases filled with flowers. In the centre of the room, between the columns, ample marble steps lead to the terrace, which commands a view over a great part of the town.*

[*Enter* MARCO, GUIDO, BORSO, *and* TORELLO]

GUIDO. I yielded to you, to her, to every one; but now it is only just that I should have my turn. I have been silent, I have held my breath, I have hidden — as a coward might hide while thieves are plundering his house. But, in my degradation, I have still retained my honour . . . You have made a tradesman of me, a huckster, a weaver of cunning bargains . . . But now the dawn has come . . . I have not budged from my place . . . A contract was made, I had to respect it: I had to purchase your food . . . This night, this noble night, belonged to the buyer . . . Ah, who knows, it was not too high a price, perhaps, to pay for this wheat, for all these sheep and oxen . . . Now you have eaten your fill, and I have paid . . . Now I am free, I am master once more; and I hurl my shame from me! . . .

MARCO. My son, I know not what your intentions may be, and no one has the right to intrude upon a grief like yours . . . Words cannot soften it, and I can well understand that the happiness which it has caused, which surrounds you on every side, can only embitter it, and render it more poignant . . . The city is saved, but we almost regret the salvation which has cost you so dear; and we bend our heads before you who have had to bear the whole burden . . . And yet, could we recall yesterday, I should still have to act as I did, mark out the same victims, and plead for the same injustice; for the man who would be just is compelled all his life sorrowfully to choose between two or three acts of varying injustice . . . I know not what to say to you; but if this voice of mine that once you loved could for the last time

reach your heart, I would beg of you, my son, not blindly to follow the first counsels of anger and grief . . . Wait, at least, until the dangerous hour be past which impels us to utter words that cannot be recalled . . . Vanna will soon be here. Do not judge her to-day. Do nothing irrevocable . . . For all that one does and says beneath the empire of an overpowering grief is so naturally, so cruelly, irrevocable! . . . Vanna will return, rejoicing, despairing . . . Do not reproach her . . . If you do not feel yourself strong enough to speak to her as you will speak after many days, let some time pass before you see her . . . For in us poor creatures, who are merely the playthings of irresistible forces, there resides so much goodness, and justice, and wisdom, in the years that pass; and the only words that count, that we must eagerly grope for when misfortune blinds us, are those that we shall pronounce when full understanding has come, when we have forgiven and once more begun to love . . .

Guido. You have finished? It is well. This is no longer the hour for honeyed phrases, nor is there any one here to-day whom they still can deceive . . . I have suffered you, and for the last time, to say what you had to say; for I was curious to know what your wisdom could offer me in exchange for the life it has so effectually ruined . . . See what it gives me! To wait, to be patient, to accept, forget, to pardon and weep! . . . Well, no! That does not suffice! . . . I had rather not be wise, and get rid of my shame! Words cannot do this for me . . . And as for my intentions, they are very simple — I shall act as you would have urged me to act but a few years ago. A man has taken Vanna from me; Vanna is no longer mine while this man exists. For I, you see, am guided by other rules than those that govern the verb and the adjective. I obey the great law before which every man bends whose heart is alive within him . . . Pisa has food now, weapons; she can eat, she can fight; very well, I claim my share. From this day onwards her fighting men are mine, or, at least, the best of them — those I myself recruited and paid for, out of my purse. I have discharged my duty to Pisa — now I demand my own. These men shall not go back to her until they have done what I in my turn have now the right to exact . . . As for the rest — for Vanna — I forgive her, or shall forgive her when this man has ceased to be . . . She has been deceived, she has been led astray; but, at least, there was heroism in what she did . . . The foulest advantage was taken of her mercy, her greatness of soul . . . Be it so . . . To forget may be impossible; but at least this deed of hers may fade so remotely into the past that it shall hide itself from the love that seeks it . . . But there exists one creature whom I shall never behold without shame and horror . . . A man is here whose sole mission in life was to be the guide, the prop, of a great and noble happiness. He has become its enemy, and its scourge; and there shall happen before you all a thing that is terrible and yet is just . . . You shall see a son, who, in a world for a moment out of gear, judges his own father, denies him, and curses him; thrusts him from his presence, despises and hates him! . . .

Marco. Curse me, my son, but pardon her . . . If there be in this heroic act that has saved so many lives a fault that cannot be pardoned, then is that fault all mine, but the heroism hers. . . . My advice was good; but advice was easy for me, who bore no share in the sacrifice; and to-day, when it deprives me of all that I hold dearest in the world, it seems still better to me than it did before . . . I have no right to quarrel with your judgment; when I was younger I should have judged like you . . . I go, my son, and you shall behold me no more; I can well understand that my presence is odious to you — and yet I shall try to see you again without being seen by you . . . And since I depart, scarce daring to hope that I may live to see the hour when you will pardon the wrong I have done you — for my own past reminds me that pardon comes slowly when one is still in the prime of life — since I leave you thus, let me, at least, be convinced that I take with me all your hatred and bitterness, all your cruel memories; and that none will remain for her who is to come . . . Beyond this I have but one prayer . . . Let me, and for the last time, see her throw herself into your arms . . . Then I shall go without a murmur, without deeming you unjust . . . It is good that in human sorrow the oldest should take on his shoulders

all that he can bear; seeing that he has but few steps before him ere his burden shall fall aside . . .

[*Already during* MARCO'S *last words, a vague and mighty murmur has been heard from without. In the silence that follows, this noise increases, drawing nearer and becoming more and more distinct. First there is an expectant stir, then still distant shouts of a crowd rushing from point to point. Soon the vague cries take form, and one hears from all sides, more and more clearly, repeated a thousand times, "Vanna, Vanna, our Monna Vanna! Glory to Monna Vanna, Vanna, Vanna, Vanna!"*]

MARCO [*rushing to the porticos that open on to the terrace*]. It is Vanna! . . . She returns! . . . She is there! . . . They acclaim her; they acclaim her! Listen, listen!

[BORSO *and* TORELLO *follow him to the terrace, while* GUIDO *remains alone, leaning against a pillar and looking straight before him. All this time the noise from without becomes louder and draws rapidly nearer*]

MARCO [*on the terrace*]. Ah, see! The square, the streets, the windows, the trees, are all black with waving heads and arms! The roofs, the tiles, the leaves, would seem to be changed into men! . . . But where is Vanna? I see only a cloud that shuts and opens . . . Borso, my poor eyes play me false and betray my love . . . Old age and tears are blinding them . . . They cannot see the one creature they yearn for . . . Where is she, where is she? . . . Which way must I go to meet her? . . .

BORSO [*holding him back*]. No; do not go down; the people are wild, they have lost all control. They are mad with excitement; women are fainting, men trodden under foot! . . . Besides, it is useless; she comes, there she is, there she is! . . . See, she raises her head! . . . She sees us! . . . She is hurrying to us! Ah, she looks up and smiles! . . .

MARCO. You see her, but I cannot! . . . These moribund eyes of mine can distinguish nothing! . . . For the first time I curse the old age that has taught me so much, and now hides this one thing from me! . . . But you who can see her, tell me how does she look? . . . Can you see her face?

BORSO. She returns in triumph . . . She seems to shine on the people . . .

TORELLO. But who is the man who is walking by her side?

BORSO. I know not . . . I never have seen him; he hides his face . . .

MARCO. Hark, how they shout! . . . The whole palace trembles; the flowers fall from the vases on to the steps . . . The very flagstones seem to be rising beneath us to sweep us along in this overpowering gladness . . . Ah, I begin to see . . . They are close to the gates! The crowd divides . . .

BORSO. Yes, before Vanna. They are making a lane for her, a lane of triumph, of love . . . In her path they throw flowers, palm leaves, jewels . . . Mothers hold out their children for her to touch; men stoop to kiss the stones her feet have trodden . . . Be careful, they are too near us. They are mad with joy . . . If they reach these steps we shall all be swept away . . . Ah, it is well! The guards are rushing from the other side to bar the entrance! . . . I will give orders to shut out the people and close the gates, if there be yet time . . .

MARCO. No, no! Let joy blossom here as it blossoms in the people's hearts! It is their vast love that speaks — let it do what it will! They have suffered enough! . . . Now that salvation has come let no barrier hold them back! Ah, my poor brave people, I, too, am drunk with joy; I raise my voice with yours! . . . Ah, Vanna, my Vanna! Is it you whom I see on the steps? . . . [*He rushes forward to meet* VANNA, *but* BORSO *and* TORELLO *hold him back*] Come, Vanna, come! They are keeping me back! They are alarmed at this mighty joy! Come, Vanna, come! More beautiful than Judith, and purer than Lucrece! . . . Come! . . . Here, in the midst of the flowers! [*He runs to the marble vases and seizes handfuls of flowers that he hurls to the foot of the stairs*] I, too, have flowers with which to greet the light! I, too, have lilies, laurels, and roses with which to crown glory!

[*The clamour becomes more and more delirious.* VANNA, *accompanied by* PRINZIVALLE, *appears on the top of the steps and throws herself into* MARCO'S

arms. The crowd invade the palace stairs and the terrace; but, nevertheless, remain at a certain distance from the group formed by VANNA, PRINZIVALLE, MARCO, BORSO, *and* TORELLO]

VANNA. My father, I am happy . . .

MARCO [*holding her close to him*]. And I, too, my child, since I behold you again! . . . Let me look at you through my tears . . . I see you more radiant than had you descended from the depths of the sky, that now acclaims your return! . . . The horrible foe has not been able to rob your eyes of their light, nor a single smile from your lips! . . .

VANNA. Father, I will tell you . . . But where is Guido? . . . He must be the first to hear — to be comforted, for how can he know?

MARCO. Vanna, Vanna, he is there. . . . Come . . . Me he repels, and justly, perhaps, but there is forgiveness for you, for your glorious fault; and I yearn to see you sink into his arms, that my last glance may fall upon your love . . .

[GUIDO *steps forward to* VANNA. *She is about to speak — to throw herself into his arms — but* GUIDO, *with a brusque movement, stops and repels her, and addresses himself to those round about him*]

GUIDO [*in a strident and imperious voice*]. Go, all! . . .

VANNA. No, no! They must wait! . . . Guido, I must tell you. I must tell them all . . . Guido, listen!

GUIDO [*stopping her and pushing her back, raising his voice in growing anger*]. Do not come near me, do not touch me! [*He advances towards the* CROWD, *which has invaded the hall, but now recoils before him*] Have you not heard me? I bade you go! Leave us! You are the masters in your own homes, but here I rule! Borso, Torello, summon the guard! Ah! I see what it means! You have had your food, and now you would feast your eyes on this merry spectacle! . . . No, no, you have meat and wine; I have paid for you all; is that not enough? Go, I tell you! [*Silent movement in the* CROWD, *which slowly disperses*] Let none venture to linger! [*He seizes his father violently by the arm*] You, too! You, above all! You more than the others, since the fault is yours! You shall not see my tears! I desire to be alone. Lonelier than the tomb, to know what I have to know! [*Seeing* PRINZIVALLE, *who has not stirred*] And you? . . . Who are you who stand there like a veiled statue? . . . Are you death, or shame? Have you not understood that I told you to go? [*He snatches a halberd from a* GUARD] Must I drive you hence with this halberd? . . . You touch your sword? . . . I, too, have a sword, but have other uses for it . . . Henceforth it serves against one man, and one man alone. . . . What veils are those that hide your head? . . . I am in no mood for a masquerade . . . You make no answer . . . I ask who you are? . . . Wait —

[*He approaches and is about to tear away the bandages.* VANNA *rushes between and stops him*]

VANNA. Do not touch him! . . .

GUIDO [*in amazement*]. Vanna, what, Vanna? Whence comes this sudden strength?

VANNA. It is he who saved me . . .

GUIDO. Hah! He saved you . . . When it was too late . . . A noble action, truly . . . It would have been better . . .

VANNA [*feverishly*]. But let me tell you, Guido, I implore you! One word, but one word! . . . He saved me, he spared me, respected me! . . . He comes here with me, under my protection . . . I have given my word, your word, ours! . . . You are angry now, but listen to me; only listen! . . .

GUIDO. Who is this man?

VANNA. Prinzivalle . . .

GUIDO. Who? . . . What? . . . He, that man? That man Prinzivalle!

VANNA. Yes, yes! He is your guest! He puts himself into your hands! It is he who has saved me, Guido . . .

GUIDO [*after a moment's stupor, with growing exultation and vehemence that render it impossible for* VANNA *to interrupt him*]. Ah, this, my Vanna! . . . Ah, this falls on my soul like dew from the innermost heaven! . . . Ah, Vanna, my Vanna! . . . Yes, you are right; since it had to be done, that was the way to do it! Ah, I understand your stratagem now! Yes, I see it all! . . . But I did not know, I could not imagine! . . . There are women who would have killed him, as Judith killed Holophernes! . . . But his crime is greater than that of Holophernes, and calls for a greater vengeance! . . . Therefore

you brought him here; therefore you have led him into the midst of his victims, who now shall become his executioners! . . . Ah, the magnificent triumph! . . . He followed you meekly, tenderly; and did not suspect that the kisses you gave him were kisses of hatred! . . . Here he is, caught in a trap! . . . Yes, you were right! To have killed him down there, alone in his tent, after his horrible crime — that would not have sufficed! . . . A doubt would have remained, we should not have seen him . . . All had known of the abominable compact; it was needful, therefore, that all should know the price to be paid for such treachery! . . . But how did you do it? . . . It is the greatest triumph that ever a woman . . . Ah, you shall tell them! [*He rushes to the terrace and shouts at the top of his voice*] Prinzivalle! Prinzivalle! The enemy is here! We hold him!

VANNA [*clinging to him and trying to keep him back*]. No, no! Listen! Listen, Guido, I implore you! Guido, Guido, you are wrong!

GUIDO [*shaking himself free, and shouting still louder*]. Let me go! You shall see! They must all of them know, all! [*Shouting to the* CROWD] Come back, all of you! You may, you must! . . . And you, too, my father! You who are crouching there behind the pillars, as though expecting a god to spring forth to repair the wrong you caused, and restore me my happiness! Come back! This is joy, joy! There has been a great miracle! I want the very stones to hear what has happened! I need skulk in corners no longer — that is all over — I shall go hence purer than the purest, richer than those who have lost nothing! Ah, now you can acclaim my Vanna! I acclaim her with you, and louder than you all!

[*The* PEOPLE *hasten on to the terrace, he drags them into the hall*]

GUIDO. This time you shall see a spectacle! There is a justice, after all! . . . Ah, I knew it well, but could not believe that it could act so promptly! . . . I thought years and years must pass; that I should have to spend my life seeking my foe, in towns, in forests, in mountains! And, see, suddenly he springs up before me here, in this very room, on these steps, in front of us! An overpowering miracle! . . . But we shall hear . . . It is Vanna has done this! . . . And there shall be justice! [*To* MARCO, *whom he seizes by the arm*] You see that man? . . .

MARCO. Yes; who is he?

GUIDO. You have seen him before . . . You have spoken to him . . . You were his complaisant messenger . . .

[PRINZIVALLE *turns his face to* MARCO, *who recognises him*]

MARCO. Prinzivalle!

[*Movement in the* CROWD]

GUIDO. Yes, yes, it is he: there is not the least doubt . . . Come nearer. Look at him, touch him! He may have some new message to send, perhaps . . . Ah, he is no longer the magnificent Prinzivalle! But for him there shall be no pity . . . He took, by a vile and monstrous artifice, the one thing in the world that I could not give; and now he he has come to me. He has been brought hither by justice, by a stratagem more marvellous than justice, to ask of me the one recompense I can afford . . . Am I not right to call it a miracle? Come nearer, nearer! Have no fear; he cannot escape! And yet, see that the doors are shut; we must not allow another miracle to snatch him from us . . . We shall not deal with him at once . . . There shall be prolonged pleasures in store for him . . . Ah, you, my brothers, to whom he caused so much suffering; you whom he sought to massacre, whose wives and children he sold into slavery, look at him now! Yes, this is he; and he is mine, he is yours, he is ours, I tell you! . . . He has made you suffer, but what has your suffering been compared with mine? . . . He shall be yours, very soon . . . My Vanna has led him to us, that our vengeance may blot out our shame! . . . [*Addressing the* CROWD] Stand witness, all of you! There must not be one shadow of doubt . . . Have you thoroughly realised what a miracle of heroism this is? . . . That man took Vanna from me . . . I was helpless, I could do nothing; you said her . . . I have curses for none . . . The past is past . . . You had the right to prefer your life to my poor happiness . . . But Vanna, my Vanna, has known how to build love anew with the thing that had killed it . . . You destroyed; she has recreated . . . Vanna has done it! . . . She is greater than Lucrece or Judith, Lucrece who killed herself, and

Judith who slew Holophernes! Ah, that, truly, would have been too mild, too simple, too silent! . . . Vanna does not slay in a closed tent; she brings the victim to us, alive, and offers him to us all! . . . And how has she done this? . . . Listen, she will tell! . . .

VANNA. Yes, I will tell you; but it is all quite different . . .

GUIDO [*stopping her and throwing his arms round her*]. Let me kiss you first, before them all . . .

VANNA [*thrusting him violently back*]. No, no! Not yet! . . . No, no, never again if you will not hear me! Listen, Guido! I speak of an honour more real, of a happiness greater than those that are blinding you! Ah, I am glad they have all returned! They will hear me, perhaps, before you will: they will understand before you understand! Listen, Guido! . . . You shall not touch me until you know . . .

GUIDO [*interrupting her, and again trying to embrace her*]. Yes, yes, I know — but first of all I will . . .

VANNA. Listen, I tell you! In all my life I have never lied, but to-day I am telling the profoundest truth, the truth one speaks only once, that brings life or death in its train . . . Listen; and look at me well; look at me as though you had never seen me before this hour, which is the first, the only one when you truly can love me as I wish to be loved . . . I speak to you now in the name of the life we have lived together; in the name of all that I am, of all that you are to me! . . . Be capable of believing what, perhaps, can be scarcely believed . . . I was in this man's power . . . I had been handed over to him: he did not come near me, he did not touch me . . . I come from his tent as from the home of a brother . . .

GUIDO. Why?

VANNA. Because he loves me . . .

GUIDO. Ah! so that was what you had to say to us! That was the miracle? . . . Yes, yes, at your very first words I saw there was something strange . . . It was only a flash, and I paid no heed . . . I thought that the trouble, the horror had . . . But I see now that we must look into it . . . So he did not come near you, you say; he did not touch you? . . .

VANNA. No.

GUIDO. Not even kiss you?

VANNA. I gave him one kiss on the brow, which he returned.

GUIDO. And you can tell this to me! . . . Vanna, Vanna, has this fearful night driven you mad?

VANNA. I tell you the truth.

GUIDO. The truth! Great God! it is that, and that alone, that I seek! But the truth must be human . . . What! a man who betrays his country, ruins his life, sets all the world against him for ever — and does all this that you should go to his tent alone — this man demands but a kiss on the brow; and comes to us here with you to make us believe it? . . . No, no; we must be just, and not gibe too much at misfortune . . . If this was all that he asked, why inflict so much misery upon our whole people? And flood me with such despair? . . . This night has lasted ten years: I have scarcely survived it! . . . Ah, had this been all he sought he could have saved us without this torture! . . . We should have welcomed him like a god, like a deliverer! You shake your head . . . See, the people shall judge, the people shall answer. [*Addressing the* CROWD] Have you heard? I know not why she has said these things; but what she has said is said, and you shall be judges . . . You will believe her, perhaps, since she has saved you . . . If you believe her, speak . . . Let those who believe her step out from the crowd! . . . Let them come to us here, and give the lie to poor human reason! . . . Let them come, all those who believe! . . . I am anxious to look at them, and see what sort of men they are! . . .

[MARCO *alone stands forth from the* CROWD. *One hears only faint, dim, and indistinct murmurs*]

MARCO [*rushing forward*]. I believe her!

GUIDO. You! You are their accomplice . . . But the others, the others, where are the rest who believe? . . . [*To* VANNA] Have you heard? The people you saved shrink from the laughter that would burst from every corner of the hall . . . The few who murmured have not dared to show themselves, and I —

VANNA. They have no cause to believe me; but you, you who loved me!

GUIDO. Ah, I who loved you should therefore become your dupe! No, no! Now listen to me! I speak to you calmly, I have ceased to be angry . . . I have gone through too much, I begin suddenly to feel old . . . No, I am

not angry . . . There is no anger left in me — something else will take its place, I suppose — old age, madness, I know not yet . . . At present I look, I search, I grope in myself, to discover the happiness that once was mine . . . I have one hope, one hope alone; a hope so frail that I scarcely can grasp it . . . A word would destroy it; and yet, in my despair, I must make the attempt . . . Vanna, I was wrong to call back the crowd before knowing . . . I should have remembered how galling it must be to you to proclaim to them all that that monster had caused you to suffer . . . Yes, I should have waited until we were alone; then you would have confessed the truth, the horrible truth. But I know it, alas! and the others all know. Of what avail to hide it, Vanna? . . . It is too late . . . There is no help for it now; and you, too, must understand . . . In moments like these reason is incapable of —

VANNA. Look at me, Guido; all my loyalty, all my strength and my truth are in my eyes now as I speak! . . . The truth, the truth, believe it! . . . He did not touch me.

GUIDO. Good! It is good. It is very good! Now I know all, and all is gone from me . . . Yes, it is the truth; or rather, it is love. Ah, I understand; you seek to save him. I did not realise that the woman I loved could change so quickly. But not that way can he be saved! [*He raises his voice*] Hear me, all of you! I will for the last time swear an oath . . . To restrain myself now demands superhuman effort; my hold on myself is weakening. I make one final effort; there is one moment yet before I break down . . . That moment I will not lose . . . Can you hear me, you all; or is my voice grown too weak? Come nearer, nearer! . . . You see this woman, that man; they love each other . . . Well. Now hear me. I am weighing all my words as scrupulously as one weighs the medicine given to the dying . . . These two shall go from me here, with my consent, shall go freely, unmolested, untouched, unharmed. They shall take with them whatever they choose. You shall open your ranks to afford them passage. You shall strew their path with flowers, if it so please you. They shall go wheresoever their love may guide their footsteps; and all I ask in exchange is that this woman shall first of all tell me the truth, the only possible truth . . . That is the one thing left to me now that I can still love in her . . . I demand the truth that she owes me, in exchange for what I will give her . . . You understand, Vanna? you have only one word to say . . . All here are witness . . .

VANNA. I have told you the truth . . . He did not touch me . . .

GUIDO. It is well. You have spoken — you have condemned him. Now there is nothing more to be done. [*He calls the* GUARDS *and points to* PRINZIVALLE] That man belongs to me; take him and bind him; thrust him into the lowest dungeon beneath this hall. I shall go with you. [*To* VANNA] You will never see him again; but on my return I shall report to you his last words . . .

VANNA [*throwing herself in the midst of the* GUARDS, *who are seizing* PRINZIVALLE *and leading him away*]. No, no! I have lied, I have lied. [*To* GUIDO] Yes, what you say is true! [*Pushing the* GUARDS *away*] Go, you must not take what is mine! For he is mine, he belongs to me, not to you! To me alone! It is for me to punish — the coward who when I was helpless, defenceless . . .

PRINZIVALLE [*trying to drown her voice*]. She lies! She lies! She lies to save me, but torture me as you will —

VANNA. Be silent! [*Turning to the* CROWD] He is afraid! [*Approaching* PRINZIVALLE, *as though enforcing silence upon* PRINZIVALLE] Give me chains, and irons! Now that I dare speak out my hatred, it is I who shall bind him, I who brought him here. [*Whispering to* PRINZIVALLE *as she ties his hands*] Be silent! He saves us, be silent! He has joined us. I belong to you, I love you! I love you, my Gianello! I put these chains on you, but I shall guard you, and free you! We two shall fly together! [*Shouting as though enforcing silence upon* PRINZIVALLE] Be silent! [*Addressing the* CROWD] He pleads for mercy! [*Uncovering his face*] Look at his face; it was my dagger, my dagger inflicted that wound! Look at him! He, the coward, the monster! [*Seeing that the* GUARDS *make a movement as though to remove* PRINZIVALLE] No, no, leave him to me! He is my victim, my prey! It is I who have bought him! He belongs to me!

GUIDO. Why did he come, and why did you lie to me?

VANNA [*hesitating and picking her words*]. Why I lied . . . I scarcely know, I did not want to say . . . Ah, well, I must tell you now . . . There are times when one scarcely knows what one does, and is groping in the dark . . . Yes, you shall know, you shall know, for now I have torn away the veil . . . It was the thought of your love, of your despair, that alarmed me . . . But I will tell you. [*In a calmer voice and with more assurance*] No, no, I had not the idea you speak of . . . I did not bring him here that we two, you and I, should be publicly avenged in the midst of a crowd; my idea, perhaps, was less noble, but my love for you prompted me . . . I yearned to inflict a cruel death upon him, but was anxious also that the horrible memory of this horrible night should not weigh upon you to the end of your days . . . It was my intention to revenge myself in the dark . . . To inflict a slow, lingering death upon him . . . Do you see? . . . Kill him slowly, little by little, till his blood, falling drop by drop, should have wiped out his crime . . . You would never have known the awful truth, and there would have been no spectre between us . . . I feared, I confess, that the memory of this would lessen your love for me . . . I was foolish, I know . . . It was mad to expect you to believe . . . But now you shall learn all . . . [*Addressing the* CROWD] Hear me, and you shall judge me! What I said before I said for Guido's sake, for the sake of our love . . . Now I shall tell you all . . . I tried to kill that man; I wounded him, as you see . . . But he disarmed me . . . Then I thought of a deeper revenge, and I smiled on him; and he, the fool, had faith in my smile . . . And now he is here in his tomb, that I myself shall seal down . . . I kissed him, and he believed in my kiss; and he followed me, like a lamb. And I hold him now in my hands, and my hands shall close down on him! . . .

GUIDO [*approaching*]. Vanna! . . .

VANNA. Look at me well! . . . So mad is this man, he believed me at once when I said "Prinzivalle, I love you!". . . Ah, he would have followed me down to the heart of hell! . . . And now he is my man; he is mine, before God and the world! I have won, I have bought him! . . . [*She totters and supports herself against the column*] Take care, I fall. There is too much joy now, in the thought of the vengeance to come! [*To* MARCO] Father, I entrust him to your care, till I am stronger . . . You shall take charge of him, find a prison for him, a profound dungeon into which no one shall enter . . . And give me the key; I must have the key; I want it at once. No one shall touch him, go near him; he belongs to me, to me; he is mine; I alone shall punish . . . Guido, he belongs to me! [*Stepping towards* MARCO] Father, he is mine; you shall answer for him. [*She looks fixedly at him*] You understand, you are his guardian. You are responsible for him; not a hand shall approach him, and when I go to him he shall be as he is, now that I give him to you. [PRINZIVALLE *is taken away*] Fare you well, my Prinzivalle! Ah, we shall meet again!

[*While* GUIDO *is in the midst of the* SOLDIERS, *who brutally remove* PRINZIVALLE, VANNA *screams, totters, and falls into the arms of* MARCO, *who rushes forward to support her*]

MARCO [*rapidly, in a low voice, bending over* VANNA *as she lies in his arms*] Yes, Vanna, I understand; I understand your falsehood. You have achieved the impossible . . . It is just and very unjust, like all the things that one does . . . and still it is life that is right . . . Collect yourself, Vanna; you will have to lie again, since he refuses to believe . . . [*Calling* GUIDO] Guido, she asks for you . . . Guido, she is coming to herself . . .

GUIDO [*rushing up and taking her in his arms*]. My Vanna! See, she smiles! . . . Vanna, tell me! . . . I never doubted . . . Now it is over, and all will be forgotten — wiped away in our good revenge . . . It was all a bad dream . . .

VANNA [*opening her eyes, and speaking in a feeble voice*]. Where is he? Yes, yes, I know, I remember . . . Give me the key . . . The key of his prison; none but myself must . . .

GUIDO. The moment the guards come back they shall bring the key to you, and all shall be as you wish . . .

VANNA. I want it for myself alone. So that I may be quite sure, and that no one else . . . Yes, it has been a bad dream . . . but the beautiful one will begin. The beautiful one will begin . . .

THE END

THE DAWN

(*1898*)

By Émile Verhaeren

ÉMILE VERHAEREN AND "THE DAWN"

Émile Verhaeren met his death during the Great War; he was in a railway station and was crushed by a passing locomotive — by the very energy and modernness which, as a poet, he embedded so physically, so spiritually, in his verse. His very acute biographer — Stefan Zweig — whose vibrant, lyrical appreciation is in itself a work of creative art, even if not the best of formal biographies — has truthfully said that in Verhaeren the modern poet was typified, not riding the classical Pegasus, but the powerful engine. We must take Verhaeren as the European Walt Whitman, sensing the primitive in man, the unity in crowds, the majesty of cities, the stern beauty of ugliness, the red Terror of Socialism, the potency of the common word, the accord of surging blood, of changing emotion with free verse.

I hesitated some time before including Verhaeren in this anthology. Fundamentally he is not a dramatist, but a lyric poet; the practical theatre looks askance at his plays, though Reinhardt brought to triumph "The Cloister", while "Philip II" and "Hélène de Sparta" were adequately externalized. But my doubts were overcome when I considered that in his person Verhaeren represents those elements in modern life best illustrated by the high moments in modern drama. When one takes him beyond those influences which tried to engulf him as they tried to engulf Maeterlinck — they both having fought against the constricting influences of the College of Sainte-Barbe — he enters the realm of modern industrialism, bringing to it a burning vision, which no other poet than Whitman has shown. I take him because, in the laudation of the multitude, in his reaching down into the turbulence of labor for spiritual meaning, in his universality which comes from consciousness of mass feeling and aspiration, he is so typically such stuff as the modern dramatist is made of. He has, in the bulk of his work, some of the fumes of that decadence which came near swamping him and Maeterlinck; he has the color, the reaction of a man in whom Belgium was as infallibly impressed as upon Belgian art. In him, one finds an excellent example of inheritance working its way. But in his final rending of bonds, one finds as complete a revolution as in Ibsen, when he broke from his folk-lore period and the narrowness of Bergen and his national outlook into broader fields.

I include Verhaeren in this volume because I believe that his dramas have in them just those qualities of mood and temper which I imagine the modern scenic artist is eager to meet with. He points the way to that new dramatist who is prophecied to come out of the new "stagecraft" to meet its specific demands. I take him because he recognizes mass movement, mass psychology, and, in a lyric manner, uses this mass as specifically in design as the Greeks used the Chorus. Surely "The Dawn" is as representative of modern forces at work in literature as other plays in this volume, and, if "Monna Vanna" emphasizes a moral problem of extraordinary dramatic value and of unusual attitude, the new morality which arises out of the struggle between the country and the town in "The Dawn" is just as

effective, with the same prophetic note and the same tragic close that mark the events in early Christian history.

I believe that Verhaeren's handicap as a dramatist lies largely in the fact that his philosophical ideas are continuously evolutionary; the clearer one understands the various steps in his struggle to reach the social goal he finally attained, the clearer will be seen the import of his dramas, which form a part of his evolutionary scheme. Zweig writes:

"'Le Cloitre' is a re-creation of the book of verse, 'Les Moines', is the tragedy of Catholicism; 'Les Aubes' is a condensation of the sociological trilogy, 'Les Villes Tentaculaires', 'Les Campagnes Hallucinées', 'Les Villages Illusoires.' 'Philipp II' shapes the tragedy of the Antichrist, the contrast of Spain and Belgium, of sensuality and asceticism. And 'Hélène de Sparte', which in its outward form manifests a return to classicism, handles purely moral, eternal problems."

Vitality bursting the bonds of formalism, Verhaeren became the disciple of *vers libre.* Miss Amy Lowell treats him in her "Six French Poets" (Macmillan). It is curious that Arthur Symons, in his "The Symbolist Movement in Literature" (E. P. Dutton and Company), revised recently, should not have given him special consideration, especially as he has so happily served as one of his translators. This free verse, dependent not so much after all upon theory as upon a physical basis of surge and resurge, presented interesting effects when Verhaeren came to write his dramas; and, therefore, on the score of ultra-modern lyrical technique on our stage, "The Dawn" is worthy a place in this collection because of that utilization of a mixed form of verse and prose which best represented the crossed wires of his peculiar nervous constitution.

All writers, who have examined into his work, speak of Verhaeren's fury of reaction — whether toward the past, the present, or the future. His verse was written for reading, since he loved to read aloud; he had an emotion comparable to a symphony orchestra. The painter of words, of pictures, of ideas, has a tempo which is characteristically his own — "the rhythm of a man hurrying, rushing, running, of a restless, passionate man; the rhythm of the modern, of the Americanized man," so writes Zweig.

I have suggested enough to measure the vitality of Verhaeren as an artist of the modern development. If one will not accept him under the heading of "revolutionary" or "transitional" dramatist — I take him on both counts — one can at least justify him as a dramatist because of his democratic sympathies, which in him rose to tremendous lyrical eloquence. "The Dawn", as art, is intimately allied to every step of his artistic development — a development which includes, in its fullest comprehension, an understanding of Belgian life. It was Verhaeren whom Maeterlinck thought deserved election to the French Academy, rather than himself. And, in following the friendship of Verhaeren with Maeterlinck, Van Lerberghe, Rodenbach, Rodin, Gide, Mockel, Vielé-Griffin, Rysselberghe, and Romain Rolland, one is coming in contact with many causes and effects that have made the continental movement in modern drama so important.

In an early edition of "The Dawn", Arthur Symons explained what he tried to do in his translation of the play. He writes:

"From 'Les Flambeaux Noirs' onwards, all M. Verhaeren's poems have been in *vers libre,* but a verse very much firmer in rhythm, very much more regular in accentuation, than the *vers libre* of most French writers of the present day. 'Les Aubes' is written in a mixture of prose and verse, which, in France, is a very novel

experiment indeed. To English readers, accustomed to the Elizabethan drama, nothing can seem more natural than such an alternation, marking the rise and fall of emotion and solemnity in the speakers. I have translated M. Verhaeren's verse very literally, and I have followed all his rhythms with great exactitude. But, for the most part, I have used unrhymed in place of rhymed verse, reserving rhyme for the speeches of the Seer, which are in a more definitely stanzaic form in the original, and for the ronde on page 662. It seemed to me that this was the best way of conveying M. Verhaeren's form into English; and, having finished my translation, I wrote to him, telling him exactly what I had done. He replied: '*Si le vers français sans rime existait, je l'aurais employé moi-même. Seulement le vers blanc français ne me dit rien. En anglais ce doit être mon souhait. Je vous approuve donc entièrement*'."

Besides Zweig's sensitive study of Verhaeren, the reader is referred particularly to Albert Mockel's "Émile Verhaeren" (1895). Other references are given in the bibliographical note.

THE DAWN
(*LES AUBES*)

By ÉMILE VERHAEREN

TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR SYMONS

To Paul Signac

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

THE CROWD

GROUPS: WORKMEN, BEGGARS, FARMERS, SOLDIERS, WOMEN, YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN, PASSERS, BOYS, OLD MEN

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN, *tribune*

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN, *his father*

CLAIRE, *his wife*

GEORGES, *his son*

HAINEAU, *brother of Claire*

HORDAIN, *captain of the enemy, disciple of Hérénien*

OLD GHISLAIN, *farmer*

THE CURÉ

AN OFFICER

AN EMISSARY

A GIPSY

A CONSUL *of Oppidomagne*

THE SHEPHERD

THE BEGGAR BENOIT

THE SEER *of the Villages*

THE SEER *of the Cities*

The groups act as a single person of multiple and contradictory aspects.

This play is here reprinted for the reading public through the courtesy of Duckworth & Company.

THE DAWN

ACT I

SCENE I. — *An immense open space into which converge, on the right, the roads descending from Oppidomagne; on the left, the paths rising from the plains. Lines of trees accompany them as far as the eye can see. The enemy has surrounded the town. The country is on fire. Great flaring lights in the distance; the tocsin sounds.*

Groups of BEGGARS *fill the trenches. Others, standing on gravel-heaps, scan the distance, and cry to one another.*

THE BEGGARS. — Look, from this mound you can see the villages all on fire.

— Climb the trees: we can see better.

[*A* BEGGAR, *clinging to a tree*]

— This way! this way!

BEGGARS [*looking towards the town*]. — The flames are getting brighter and bigger, towards the town.

— The powder-mills are blowing up. [*The sound of firing and explosions*] The works at the port are on fire, and the quays, and the docks. The petroleum-sheds have caught fire. Yards and masts burn black, and make crosses against the sky!

BEGGARS [*looking towards the plains*]. — The country is all red, over the plains. The fire has got hold of Hérénien's farm: they are throwing the furniture into the street, pell-mell. They are bringing the beasts out of the stable with covered heads. They are carrying out the old sick father on his great bed.

— It is the farmer's turn now to have death on his heels.

— Ah! what a fine, quick vengeance! They are cast out themselves, they who cast us out. The crowd of them heaps the highways. All our curses have carried; all our blasphemies, all our prayers, all our angers!

— See there, the cattle flying to the fens,
The stallions rear and snap the trace in two,
And snort against this woeful torch;
And one has fled, with burning at his heels
And death upon his flying mane,
He turns his head about, and bites the flame
That eats upon his neck;
Look all of you, and see the hands
Of madmen piling up the flame with pitchforks.

— The bells madden in the wind. Churches and towers crumble. God Himself might have fear.

— Who knows why this war was unchained?

— All the kings desire Oppidomagne. They desire it to the ends of the earth. [PEOPLE *rush up excitedly, and disappear confusedly in every direction. Some stop, and cry.*

— The farmers are piling up their furniture and their clothes on waggons; they are coming towards the town; they will pass here.

THE GROUP OF BEGGARS. — This is the moment to make for Oppidomagne.

— Follow them.

THE BEGGAR BENOIT. Follow them? And of what race are *you*, then?
Since you and I have been revolters, vagabonds,
Yes, you and I, all of us, all the time,
Have not these farming, homestead folk
Bent us and broken us with aching poverty?
They, they have been the bread,
And we, we have so sorely been the hunger,
That the sharp flames which eat
Their bursting granaries now
Seem to me like our very teeth
And the malevolent tearing of our vehement nails!
Since I have come and gone, and come and gone, and come again,
Barring with evil luck
The gates at which I beg,

My hands have spread the sickness that they breed,
My hands have rooted up their dead,
Have stolen their dead, my aged hands
Have gagged their daughters, and have ravished them;
I hate them as a man may hate
The evillest thing upon the earth;
And now at least let them be bashed
With their own pikes and their own poles.

An Old Man. What is the good of bashing them? They will do no more harm; they are more wretched than we are.

The Beggar Benoit. Be silent, you are too old to be a man any longer.

[*Fresh bands hurry along the Oppidomagne road. A group of* Workmen *appears. One of them speaks to the* Beggars]

The Workman. Has Hérénien passed yet?

A Beggar [*to the* Workman]. The shepherd knows him. Ask him.

The Workman [*to the* Shepherd]. Has Hérénien passed here?

The Shepherd [*in rags*]. I am waiting for him. He has gone to look after his father. I want to see him again. I cured him when he was a child.

The Workman. He is sure to come. We will wait for him together.

The Shepherd. How has he left the city? His enemies themselves ought to have kept him there.

The Workman. Hérénien does what he likes. His father was dying at the village, and called him.

The Shepherd. Do you think he will conquer Oppidomagne?

The Workman. Is he not the master of the people?
He is that wonderful and sacred thing
That lives, beyond the shadow of this hour,
Already in the future, which he touches;
None better have discerned than he
How much of folly mixed with how much wisdom waits
To bring the new to-morrows in;
His clear books cast a light on all we think about.
'Tis there we other mortals learn
What is the way that leads to good
And what exalts a man, at such an hour, to be a God.

The Shepherd. You are one of those who love and defend him in the city.

The Workman. Hundreds we are, thousands we are
Who worship him, and follow him,
No matter where he goes, unto the very end.

[The Workman *goes on ahead, to watch for* Hérénien. *More people in flight, then a group of peasants dragging after them carts and hand-carts. The horses have climbed the hill, with heavy loads*]

Old Ghislain. Our beasts are tired out. Let them get wind again. Hallo, there, you beggars, has that scoundrel Hérénien passed this way?

The Beggar Benoit. Old Ghislain, be silent.

Old Ghislain. Be silent! be silent! why? who for? Hérénien is one of you then?

The Beggar Benoit. Old Ghislain, we are the power here, and we can strike you down, before you have so much time as to cry murder. If, for all these years and these years, you have thrown to us at your doors the refuse of your pigs and the washings of your kitchen, we too, for all these years and these years, have we not given you our prayers and our *aves?* We are quits for the past, and the present is ours.

[*He advances towards* Father Ghislain *menacingly*]

A Peasant [*running up*]. Old Ghislain, Old Ghislain, your farm, "Tinkling Meadow," has spread the fire to the whole of "Wolf Plain."
The trees are burning, on the roads,
And the whole fir-wood snorts
And cries and howls aloud,
And all the flames spire up,
Up to the clouds,
And the flames bite the very sky!

Old Ghislain. Well, and what then? and what has that to do with me?
Let all the plain and all the woods be-gone,
And let the wind, the air, and the sky burn,
And let the earth itself break as a pebble breaks. [*With a change of tone*]
Just now this beggar talked of killing me.

[*To the beggar* Benoit]

Well, do it, then; be quick with you!
Here are my hands, here are my arms, that I have sold
For a vain labour; here too is my obstinate brain;
Here is my skin withered in all its pores,
Here is my back, here are the rags of me,
The ruin that I drag about
All the long years, all the long years!

Truly I ask myself, why is it that I live?
I dig a field the frost will reap,
I farm the meadows that are evil-starred;
All that my father hoarded up, farthing by farthing, all
That he had squeezed, and hid, and burrowed, like a miser,
I have lost all, eaten it all.
I have implored my sons: they have devoured me;
They have been swallowed up in the unfruitful town,
They have preferred a life unfruitful, infamous;
Hamlets and little towns are dead;
Oppidomagne has sapped the strength of them,
Oppidomagne has drained the blood of them;
And now, behold
In every acre and in every close
Branching abroad the several maladies
Of water and of earth and air and sun!

A Peasant. Your sorrows are ours. We are all equally wretched.

Old Ghislain. When I was but a child, we feasted sowing-time,
The soil was kindly then to folk and to horned beasts,
The flax came up like happiness in flower.
But now, but now men fear the earth.
And surely needs must something have been violated,
Some sacred and some obscure thing;
Now 'tis the coal that all belongs to, kept,
Once, in the covering night.
The netted rails, upon the plains bestarred
With golden signals, swarm;
Trains graze the meadow-lands, and pierce the banks;
The living skies are eaten up with piercing smoke;
The grass bleeds, and the virgin herb, harvest itself,
Feed on the sulphur's poisonous breath. 'Tis now
That, terrible in victory, come forth
Iron, and lead, and fire;
And hell itself comes forth with them!

[*The* Beggars *recoil, and cease to threaten.*]

A Beggar. Poor man!

Old Ghislain. Poor man! But no! [*Drawing towards him a peasant, and pointing to an enclosure which is burning*] You think, do you, that it was the enemy set fire to my enclosure? Undeceive yourselves. [*Showing his hands*] It was these two hands.

And my woods by "Firefly Pond"? These hands again. And my granaries and my ricks? These always. No, no, Old Ghislain isn't a poor man. It is he, he only perhaps, who sees clear. We don't respect our fields; we lose patience with the slow and sure of things; we kill the germs; we overheat them; we arrange, we reason, we contrive. The earth isn't a wife now; it's a kept woman!
And now, see how the enemy annihilates it!
Where it was wounded by the town,
'Tis burnt by war, the torch of war;
Where the wise man had wellnigh drained it dry,
The bullets fire it now.
Alas, alas, this is the death of it!
There is no need of rain or dewfall now,
There is no need of snow about the mountain's head,
Nor yet of sun, nor of months clear and sweet.
And it were better at one stroke
To end, ending the country-side.

A Peasant. Truly, Old Ghislain is not sound in his head.

Another. It is a crime to blaspheme the earth.

Another. We do not know what to believe.

[*The village* Seer *appears; he hums, imitating by his gestures the flight of the fiery crows*]

The Seer. The forests fly and the meadow flows,
And the storm puts ruddy fingers forth
In crosses to the south and north.
It is the hour of the Fiery Crows.

They swoop on house and they sweep on hedge,
With frantic claws and wings stretched wide,
And with their burning plumes they fledge
The shifting skies on every side.

So swift they wing from banks and briars
Their unreturning passage out,
They seem the messengers of the fires
That ring the whole round world about.

Terror attends without a sound
The mystery of their silent flight;
Their beaks are sharp to rend the ground,

And savage there to ravage there
The very heart of earth from our delight.

The seeds we sow, ere we have sown them, die,
The hayricks, with their leaping flames that wing
Their flying way towards the sunsetting,
Seem, in the smoke that whirls them high,
Like wild and bloody horses galloping.

This is the hour that was foretold.
Ho, bells! ho, bells! the bells have tolled;
Toll for the death of harvest, and the death of all.
This is the hour that was foretold.
Ho, the death-bells! ho, the death-bells! the bells have tolled;
Toll the death-bells for the world's funeral.

OLD GHISLAIN. Ah well, it is he who is in the right, the seer, the madman, he, whom we all mocked, whom I mocked myself, and whom I have never understood. Ah, the formidable light is there now. [*He points to the horizon*] But he knew it long ago. And we were there, all of us, with an old hope, with our old illusions, putting the poor little bar of our common-sense between the spokes of the terrible wheels of destiny.

[*A troop of young folks from the villages, farm labourers, workmen, stable-maids, beggars, carry forward* PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN *on a litter. A* PRIEST *accompanies them. The dying man signs to them that he suffers too much, and that they must stop*]

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN. Here, my friends. Set him down gently. [*Helping those who carry him. Then, as if speaking to himself*] Poor old man, poor old man! who could not die in his bed like his father! Oh, these wars, these wars, they must be hated with a diamond-like hatred.

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN. Hérénien, Hérénien!

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN. Here I am, father, close to you, close to your hands and your eyes; close to you, as in the old times, as in mother's times, so close, that I can hear your heart beat. Do you see me? do you hear me? Do you feel that it is I, and that I love you always?

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN [*breathing heavily*]. This time, it is the end. You will not be able to carry me to your home, in Oppidomagne. I am happy because the plains are all about me. I have one favor to ask of you, that you do not forbid the old curé to come to me.

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN. My father, you shall be obeyed in every will and wish. Shall I go further off?

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN. I must be alone to confess.

[HÉRÉNIEN *goes aside. The* PRIEST *approaches.* OLD GHISLAIN *accosts the tribune timidly. He speaks to him during the confession*]

OLD GHISLAIN. Monsieur Hérénien, I see you are always good. I thought otherwise. You rule Oppidomagne, and in our farms we talk of you. My sons defend you. Perhaps they are right. But tell me, now that the country is dead, how are we going to live? Where shall we find a corner to sow the seed, and grow the corn? Where shall we find an acre that the smoke and the sewers and the poisons and the war have not spoilt? tell me, tell me!

[HÉRÉNIEN *remains silent. His whole attention is given to his father. He merely shrugs his shoulders slightly when* OLD GHISLAIN *has done speaking*]

THE SHEPHERD [*who has slowly approached* HÉRÉNIEN]. Jacques, do you remember me?

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN. What! you are still alive, old shepherd? [*Embraces him with great emotion*]

THE SHEPHERD. I went a great way off, yonder, for years; I have seen new and marvellous countries. One wanders on like that, from day to day, from moor to moor, and one gets back in time to see someone die!

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN. I ask pardon of all whom I have offended.

THE CURÉ. Do not be troubled, you were a Christian, you will be saved. [*The* PRIEST *absolves him*]

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN [*leading the* SHEPHERD *up to the dying man*]. Father, this is the shepherd; you know him well, the shepherd of "Tinkling Meadow," the oldest of your servants and of your friends.

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN. [*Looking for a long time at the* SHEPHERD, *and then, all of a sudden, recognizing him, seizing his arm, and drawing him towards him. In almost a firm voice*] When I am dead,

shepherd, destroy all the old seeds. They are full of evil germs; they are rotten; they are mouldy. It is not with them that the soil shall have its espousals. And you, who have been everywhere, you shall sow new seed in my fields and in my meadows; living seed, fresh seed, good seed that you have seen and found good, yonder, in the virgin countries of the earth. [*A pause. The* SHEPHERD *bows his head and kneels. The* BEGGARS *and the* PORTERS *do the same*] And now turn me to the sun.

[*He is obeyed; but in the west, where the sun is then going down, the burning villages illuminate the country. The heat reaches to the dying man*]

A PEASANT [*pointing to* PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN]. The shadow of the fire passes over his face.

ANOTHER. He turns to the fire.

ANOTHER [*to those about* PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN]. Take care, take care, he must not see the flames.

ANOTHER. Turn him to the right.

ANOTHER. This way, this way, to the right, to the right.

[*But the old man clings to the litter, and raises himself, his face towards the setting sun and the fires*]

ANOTHER. Poor man! if he knew!

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN [*in a scarcely audible voice*]. Jacques Hérénien, come close to me, close. Let me die touching you with my fingers [*he caresses him*], and looking that way with my eyes at what I have loved most in the world. I have loved you to distraction; I have never denied you; I have almost blessed the sorrows that you have given me; and, while I have loved you, I have loved the earth. I have lived with the sun, as with God; it was the visible master of things. It would have been like a punishment if I had died in the night, in its absence. Happily, it is there before me, and I reach out my arms to it. [*He lifts himself towards the conflagration*] I can see it no longer, but I still feel the good, conquering light.

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN [*murmurs*]. Father! father! [*not knowing whether he should disabuse his father, or see in these words a sudden prediction*]

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN. I feel it, I love it, I understand; it is from there, now, that the only springtides now possible must come!

[*He falls back, and dies:* JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN *embraces his father, pressing his lips on his mouth as if he would gather the first truth that has ever left them*]

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN. Did he know what he was saying? "The only springtides now possible!"

[*Slowly* HÉRÉNIEN *returns to himself out of his reverie. The* BEGGARS, PEASANTS, *and* WORKMEN *surround him. The* SHEPHERD *holds his hands and draws him close. The* PORTERS *raise the body and move onward. At this moment a troop of* WOMEN *and* CHILDREN *coming from the city turn into the open space from the upper roads. It is led by old men*]

AN OLD MAN [*stopping and pointing to* PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN]. A dead man! and Hérénien following the bier!

ANOTHER. And this crowd?

ANOTHER. It is the whole countryside flocking towards Oppidomagne.

ANOTHER. Do they suppose they will be welcome there? [*He calls*] Hérénien! Hérénien!

HÉRÉNIEN. Who calls me?

THE OLD MAN. Oppidomagne has shut itself in within its walls; it will not permit the plain to send it its vagabonds and its dead!

HÉRÉNIEN. I am returning home; I have lost my father; I wish to bury him myself, and withdraw him from pillage and profanation.

THE OLD MAN. They will drive you back with bullets, they are turning out all who do not help in the defences.

ANOTHER OLD MAN. They are blowing up the bridges. The ramparts are bristling with troops.

ANOTHER. The city no longer knows whom it casts out. No one will recognize you.

ANOTHER. It is mad to go that way.

ANOTHER. It is risking your life.

ANOTHER [*entreatingly*]. Stay with us, among us. You will save us.

HÉRÉNIEN. I swear to you that I will enter Oppidomagne. If you doubt, follow me.

AN OLD MAN. We cannot.

A PEASANT. Better die in our own homes.

[*The* BEGGARS, *the* OLD MEN, *and some* PEASANTS *remain. The rest follow* HÉRÉNIEN. *The funeral train disappears slowly*]

AN OLD MAN. Hérénien is the only man still firm and stable, in these hours of suspended thunder. Perhaps, after all, they will welcome him.

ANOTHER. As for those who follow him, they will all be killed.

ANOTHER [*turning towards the country*]. Look yonder; the enemy teaches the elements to make war. He encircles them, deploys them, masters them, throws them forward.

ANOTHER. And the country once dead, they will destroy the cities.

AN OLD MAN OF THE TOWNS [*older than the others*]. O these cities! these cities!
And their tumults and their outcries
And their wild furies and their insolent attitudes
Against the brotherhood of men;
O these cities! and their wrath against the skies,
And their most terrible, most bestial, show,
And their stocked market of old sins,
And their vile shops,
Where wreathe, in knots of golden grapes,
All the unclean desires,
As, on a time, garlands of flowery breasts
Wreathed the white bodies of Diana's maids!
These cities!
The sense of youth is withered up in them;
The sense of heroism is sapped in them;
The sense of justice, as a useless thing, is cast away from them.
O these cities! these cities!
That spread themselves abroad like heaps of rottenness,
Like soft or vehement breeds of slime
Whose mouths and suckers wait to suck
The noble blood of all the world!

A PEASANT [*to the* OLD MEN]. Without you, the people of cities, our harvests would flourish, our barns would run over with corn! Without you, we should still be strong, healthy, and tranquil; without you, our daughters would not be prostitutes, nor our sons soldiers. You have soiled us with your ideas and with your vices, and it is you who let loose war upon us.

ONE FROM THE TOWNS [*to the* PEASANTS]. It is of you that we should complain. Why do you flock in, so many and so greedy? From your fields you hasten to us to traffic with us, to steal from us, and with so stubborn a mind, so narrow, so bitter, and so violent a soul, that you are scarcely to be distinguished from bandits. You have set your malice and your thievishness behind all our counters. You have cumbered little by little all the desks of the world. If the age grinds its teeth with a great noise of meddling and servile pens, it is your millions of hands that were willing to copy till death.

ONE FROM THE VILLAGES. You had need of us. You filled our plains with your appeals.

ONE FROM THE TOWNS. You are the dough that mediocrity kneads, the regiments that nullify numbers. You are the cause of slow usury, idleness, and sluggishness. Without you, the city would still be nervous, light, valiant; without you, surprise, vivacity, daring might have come back again. Without you, slumber would not have paralysed life, nor death soaked space with blood.

AN OLD MAN. Eh, but say now, do you think the enemy is waiting all this time, with folded arms, until you have settled your disputes? If our city perishes, certainly we might swathe it in a shroud woven of all the needless words, of all the meaningless discussions, of all the loquacity and eloquence, lavished upon it for centuries. The talkers are the only guilty ones.

ANOTHER. Everything has conspired against Oppidomagne. There are a thousand causes which ruin it, as there are a thousand worms that attack a corpse. Happily there is always some Christ, far off, on the horizon.

ANOTHER. Yesterday, the gravest insurrection terrified the city. The people took refuge in the cemetery, which overlooks the old quarters. The tombs served for ramparts. They are on strike. The Regent's soldiers surround it and cut it off.

A PEASANT. Oppidomagne is besieged, then, and besieging.

THE OLD MAN. As they did at Rome, the crowd has made an Aventine.

ANOTHER. O the foul shame of being one of this degraded race,
Whose mortal and whose trumpeting wantonness
Affrights the very reason of the earth.
Now in these hours of thunder in the air,
Instead of setting to,
Now at the last, to seek for strength out of the common strength,

It falls apart, it spreads abroad, it drops away.
Say, is there then no longer some unwavering light,
Is there no longer then an axiom of aught,
Is there no longer a strong hand with us
To scourge the wandering flock of these soft wills of ours?
Say, is there then a man no more?

[*The village* SEER, *who has never ceased roaming to and fro, prophesies*]

THE SEER. The times which were to come have come at last,
Wherein the city, long the mirror of all eyes,
The marvellous mirror that had glassed
The eyes of the world,
Scatters the glory of its memories.

Oppidomagne!
With thy quays, columns, bridges, thy triumphal arch,
Behold against thy pride
The whole horizons march!

Oppidomagne!
With thy towers, monuments, belfries, far and wide,
Behold in blood of fire written upon thy walls
The sign and seal of funerals!

Oppidomagne! Now is the hour
When all things fixed shall crumble into sand,
Unless without delay,
This day,
Some mighty one puts forth his hand!

AN OLD MAN. Oh, whoever he is, how we shall all shout for him, and how we shall be the first to bow down to him!

THE SEER. This one that we await
Shall be so great,
That needs must all you rise to him, maybe
If you would know that this indeed is he.

AN OLD MAN. He is not yet born.

ANOTHER. No one can guess him.

ANOTHER. No one proclaims him.

ANOTHER. And Jacques Hérénien?

ANOTHER. Jacques Hérénien? He is mad!

SCENE II. — *As the curtain rises, a cordon of horse soldiers bars the gate to Oppidomagne. The* SOLDIERS *are at work undermining the bridges across the river.* PATROLS *mount guard on the slope and the ramparts. A* GENERAL, *field-glass in hand, inspects the horizon. He watches what is going on, while a* MESSENGER *runs up, handing an order to the* OFFICER *in command of the cavalry.*

THE OFFICER [*reading*]. "Orders are given to admit no one into the city; except the tribune Jacques Hérénien. It is important that he should realise the favor that is shown him. He is to be opposed as a matter of form.
(Signed)
The Regency of Oppidomagne."

[HÉRÉNIEN *appears on the main road, followed by the* CROWD *of ragged men, women, workmen, farmers, and old men. Finding that entry will be difficult, he advances by himself to the officer*]

HÉRÉNIEN. I am of those who must be heard. Oppidomagne is the city where I have grown up, suffered, fought for my ideas, which are the greatest that a man can bear about with him. I loved Oppidomagne when it seemed invincible. To-day I desire my place among those who die for her. And I desire the like for all those who are here, for all whom I have met with on the way. It is I who have called them to follow me. I have turned back towards courage the flood that was going down to cowardice.

THE OFFICER. I know who you are, but I cannot alter the orders I have received.

HÉRÉNIEN. What are the orders?

THE OFFICER. To keep that barrier shut. [*He points to the gate of the city*]

HÉRÉNIEN. Then it must be that this Oppidomagne,
At the tremendous hour
When mountainous woe and terror fall upon its pride,
With the mere poor and little words of a command
Shuts to its gates,
Shuts from its door
Those that are bringing it
Their blood, their hearts,
And the most vehement flame of all their loves!
I, who so oft at night-time, at the harbour-side,
Have seen the seas
Press on and cast abroad in it
The formidable and free universe,
Even I who love her, be she evil or good,
I who so strangely love, I who so blindly love,

That I am as a son, yet passionate as a lover,
I must go forth from her, and like a hunted beast!
An order! But it is such orders that ruin a people. Do you reckon up the number of defenders when the sorrow is infinite? Do you separate for death those that the same danger unites? I insist that you make room for all.

THE OFFICER. Impossible.

[HÉRÉNIEN *goes up to the corpse of his father, and uncovers his head and shoulders*]

HÉRÉNIEN. For twenty years this man there was a soldier;
He served your leaders over the whole earth,
He has fought at the poles, in the desert, and on the sea;
Thrice he has crossed Europe from end to end
In a tempestuous cloud
Of frantic flags and golden eagles and great lights!
Is it to him you close the gates of Oppidomagne?

THE OFFICER. To all who are with you.

HÉRÉNIEN. Know, then, that it is in the name of the clearest, simplest, most unvarying law that I appeal to your honour as a man. In a few days this plain will be ruin, putrefaction, and blood. You have a mere word to say, and all our lives, to which we all have a right, will be saved. The help that men owe to men, you who bear arms, you first of all owe to us. This duty wipes out all others. There was a time when the very name of army and of watch-word was unknown.

THE OFFICER. Disperse, disperse.

HÉRÉNIEN [*looks toward the vast crowd which follows him, reckons up the number of the soldiers with a glance, and goes up to his dead father*] I ask the pardon of this dead man for desecrating his funeral with blood.

[*At this moment the* GENERAL, *who observes the scene from the height of the rampart, approaches the* OFFICER]

HÉRÉNIEN [*to the* CROWD]. I have used all means, there remains but one. You all know it. We are a thousand, and these, but a few. [*Pointing to the* SOLDIERS] Some among them have fathers and children among you. They are ours; they will let us pass. Let the women come forward: they will not fire on them.

[*Advancing alone, while the* CROWD *forms in order. To the* SOLDIERS]
He who commands you bids you commit a crime. Disobey him. The right is yours.

[*Already the* GENERAL *has rejoined the* OFFICER, *and reprimands him. The words "stupidity" and "folly" are heard. The* GENERAL *advances rapidly towards* HÉRÉNIEN *and salutes him*]

THE GENERAL. Jacques Hérénien, enter Oppidomagne. The Regency bids you welcome.

HÉRÉNIEN. At last! I knew that you had need of me, and that it is in your interest that I come into your midst. [*Pointing to the* CROWD] And all these follow me; the old men, the children, the women, they shall all return home, they will all be useful. And you, my father, you shall rest in the tomb where my two children sleep already.

[*The* GENERAL *makes no objection. The ranks open.* JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN *and some* WORKMEN *enter the city, but no sooner have they passed than suddenly, at the* OFFICERS' *command, the ranks close. The body of* PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN, *the porters, the old men, the peasants, the women and the children are thrust back. Fresh battalions hastening up lend their aid.* JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN, *astonished, turns to make his way back. He is heard to cry: "Cowardice," "Treason," "Infamy." But the tumult covers his voice. He is violently hurried into the city. And the howling* CROWD *is driven back into the plain*]

ACT II

SCENE I. — HÉRÉNIEN'S *house. Door to right; commonplace furniture; stove at back. Things lying about pell-mell. On the table, clothes that are being mended, children's toys. Heaps of books on the chairs.* CLAIRE, HÉRÉNIEN'S *wife, finishes lighting the lamps. She waits. All at once there is a noise of cheering in the street.* HÉRÉNIEN *enters. He clasps his wife in a long embrace.*

HÉRÉNIEN. We have buried my father to the left of the little ones, under the yew-tree which overlooks our burial-

place. He will rest there as he did in the village; his body will mingle with the elementary life of the herbs and plants that he loved so much.

CLAIRE. Did they spy on you?

[*During this scene* HÉRÉNIEN *changes his black clothes for indoor things. Impression of home*]

HÉRÉNIEN. I don't know. There were only a few of us. On the way back, we passed the crowd; newsboys were calling the news of the Aventine. Everybody made for the papers. Some men carried torches and sang. Along the boulevards and avenues houses lay open, split or pierced by the bombs. The rubbish was all over the pavements. Not a single gas-lamp was lighted. At the National Place a quarry-man called my name: that was all. When they allowed me to bring my father into Oppidomagne — after God knows what difficulties! — I promised that he should be buried without any crowd of people. I have kept my word. [*Finding a roll of bank-notes on the writing-desk*] What is this?

CLAIRE. They have sent the remainder of the account. [*Taking a note out of her pocket*] Look. Your last book has been read everywhere.

HÉRÉNIEN [*looking at the letter*]. They must read and discuss me; they must hunger and thirst after my justice! [*He puts the letter on the table, and opens the window. Going nearer to* CLAIRE] I thought of us, during that simple and homely funeral. I would like to have felt you by my side, when the coffin sank into the earth! My heart was so tortured, so full of pent-up tenderness, so walled up within myself. Why had I not your hands in mine, to mark there the half of my mourning! [*He takes her hand*] You are indeed my sweet and valiant one. You know me, you understand me, before you alone I dare be without compunction what I truly am: a poor human being, seldom calm, full of vehement pride and tenderness, the more exacting because I love the more. Where is the boy?

CLAIRE [*points to the room at the right*]. In our room, asleep.

HÉRÉNIEN. How often I drove my father to despair! My fits and starts of will were so wild that he used to beat me, and I cried out under his blows, and shrieked, and yelled at him all the same just what I pleased. And now to-day I would strangle my son if he were to irritate me. [*A shell bursts not far from the house.* HÉRÉNIEN *and* CLAIRE *rush to the window. The* CROWD *applauds* HÉRÉNIEN] This, now, is the best time to love. There is nothing like these crises and alarms for bringing people closer together. I seem to see you in the first months of our love; you seem to me even more beautiful; I bring you my love just as sincere, just as ardent, just as absolute as ever.

CLAIRE. And I love and serve you with all my soul.

HÉRÉNIEN. This funeral (in which some part of myself has gone, I know not what, a part of my life, my childhood) tore me away from my burning existence, given up to all, taken by all, scattered wide, far from you, far from us, all through Oppidomagne. I seemed to myself to be in the village, in the desolate land of the visionary plains; prowling, at night, on the heath, or astride of the wild colts in my father's fields. I remembered the shepherds, the servants, the maid-servants. I remembered the way to school, to church, and the exact sound of the parish bell. I was so sad and so happy; I longed to see you again, you and the child. [*Putting his arm round* CLAIRE] And now, let me see your eyes, your pale, sweet eyes, that love me more than all others, and are the fairest lights in the world. [*Leaning his face over* CLAIRE] Are they not faithful, and tender, and peaceful, and shining, and am I not foolish to make them weep sometimes?

CLAIRE. Your words go further than your thoughts, when they are unkind.

HÉRÉNIEN. Oh! I am not one of those who love tamely. But you, you love me all the same, although you know my terrible life, my real life, my real reason of being on the earth.

CLAIRE [*with a slight tone of reproach*]. You talk to me of that so often!

HÉRÉNIEN. And I will talk of it to you again; I will be brutal, and weary you, because it is my passion to be absolutely sincere with you. You would be my wife no longer, if I had to hide anything from you. I would rather see you weep than lie to you.

CLAIRE. If you were otherwise, I should love you the less.

HÉRÉNIEN. And besides, you know very well that I exaggerate; that really, when I assign you so small a space in my life, I deceive myself and you.

CLAIRE. Ah, be what you will, tormentor or despot, what does it matter?
You belong to me, you and our child, to all my love.
HÉRÉNIEN. Ah, you indeed are my wife!
When, on a night of June,
Long ago now, sweetly you gave me your soul,
Did I not swear that my lips
Never again should kiss
Another's lips,
Another's breast?
You were the flower of all the lakes and mists
That my impetuous hands
Have wrested from my haggard country
And planted in the heart of Oppidomagne;
And 'tis the soil, the waters, and the meadow-lands,
That I behold and worship in your naked eyes.
And shall not we remain, hand in hand, heart to heart,
Lost in the love that sets us free,
Adoringly, forgivingly, exultingly,
While the insatiable days eat up the time
Our fates shall let us live?
Death like a fire enrings us round about,
Night is an ambush set, and evening a disaster;
And see, in the insensate skies,
The stars hurtle together and consume,
And the hot fiery ashes fall!

[HÉRÉNIEN'S CHILD *comes in to embrace his father, who hardly notices and seems to have forgotten him. The* CROWD *goes by, with vociferous shouting.* HÉRÉNIEN *rushes to the window. Shouts are heard.* "*The Exchange is on fire!*" "*The Arsenal is on fire!*" "*The Port is on fire!*" *The reflection of the flames illuminates the room*]

HÉRÉNIEN. And what if this indeed ended Oppidomagne!
And if these bonfires emptied from their mountain-tops
The smoking blood of sacrifice?
Oppidomagne
Has gathered to its codes and ratified in laws
All that was once a hidden crime, a crafty murder,
Deceit or theft against true justice and true good.
And now that it is puffed and sated with its vices,
And drunk enough to drink the very dregs
That foul its gutters to the brim,
All the dull evils, all the muddy lusts,
Hang at its girdle, night and day,
And drain its breasts, like hungering wolves.
If then these palaces, these sheds,
If these bright arsenals, if these gloomy temples, fall,
Crumble to shameful dust,
The world will shout to see the red sparks fly,
To meet the future half-way, on the wind.
But that the city itself should have an end,
Being the soul of future things,
That these should sink under the waves of flame;
That the tied bundle of our fates
She in her hands yet holds,
Break in the furious feeble hands,
Break now, and break in face of death;
That the fair gardens of to-morrow
Whose gates she opened wide
Be wasted with the thunderbolt,
And cumbered with dead things;
It is impossible: he is mad who says it.
Oppidomagne, with all her happy hopes,
With all her beacons triumphing in the night,
Shall stand, shall stand erect,
As long as any men, whose faith is like my faith,
Have blood in them to shed, that faith bear fruit in them,
And that the blind and greedy world at length
Be fashioned to the will of the new gods!
CLAIRE. Oh! the terrors and the sorrows that we shall have to endure!
HÉRÉNIEN. Whatever they may be, I forbid you to complain of them. We live in formidable days of terrors, agonies, and new births. The unknown become the master. Men shake with an immense movement of the head the weight of all the errors of ages. Utopia resigns its wings, and takes root in the earth. Our very besiegers know of it.
CLAIRE. Had you any news of the enemy this morning?
HÉRÉNIEN. Not yet; but what the captain, Hordain, predicted yesterday, gave me fire and flame for weeks and weeks. This captain belongs to the race of men who realize the impossible. Think! he and I, to kill the war dead, here, before the discharged and powerless chiefs! To bring about the public

reconciliation of the foreign soldiers and ours! To exhaust all the forces of one's being, all the energies of one's faith, for that supreme end! What a splendid dream!

CLAIRE [*gently ironical*]. What a delusion!

HÉRÉNIEN. We should never reject a hope when it spreads such wings. What remains improbable to-day, will be accomplished fact to-morrow. Hordain relies so far only on dim surmisings, a deep but stifled discontent, secret understandings and unions. The troops refuse to fight; they are tired out; they disband. Ideas of justice are in the air. There is vague talk of concord; the spark is set to the grate. I await the breath of wind that shall set the wood and straw alight.

[HÉRÉNIEN *listens to the murmurs in the street. There is a knock at the door. The* CONSUL *of Oppidomagne enters the room*]

THE CONSUL. Jacques Hérénien, I come to you in the name of the Regency of Oppidomagne, to ask you to accomplish a great duty. Far as our ideas are from one another, an understanding between us is certain, when it is a question of saving the city. I seem to speak to the future leader of this people that we love in different ways, but both of us ardently.

HÉRÉNIEN. Preambles are useless. I ask what brings you, and what you expect of me? [*He motions to the* CONSUL *to sit down*]

THE CONSUL. Up yonder, at the cemetery, the situation of your friends is lamentable. They would not resist a serious attack; yesterday the Regency was anxious to bring them to order; but they seem to be numerous, young, hardy; they are needed for the defence of Oppidomagne. Up to now, they were scarcely rebels; they are disaffected, on strike: that is all. To-morrow, when they have seen the terrible conflagrations that are spreading yonder, perhaps they will in turn become incendiaries. Hate counsels folly, and if they slay and pillage, it will not indeed be the end of things, but it will be an end in shame.

HÉRÉNIEN. I hold war in execration. This between men of the same soil terrifies me more than any other. You, in Oppidomagne, have moved heaven and earth to bring it about. You have cultivated the misery of the people; you have refused it bread, justice, dignity; you have tyrannized it in its body and in its thought; you have helped yourselves with its ignorance, as with your disloyalty, your cleverness, your lying, your irony, and your contempt. You are unworthy and culpable.

THE CONSUL. I believed you to have a more balanced, a more unclouded, and a loftier judgment.

HÉRÉNIEN. I think and judge before you, as I would think and judge before the enemy. I hate, but pity you.

THE CONSUL [*rising*]. This is an outrage.

HÉRÉNIEN. It is passion and frankness.

THE CONSUL. It is above all injustice.

HÉRÉNIEN. Come now! But shall I ever end if I begin to show you the anger of the cities and the dread of the country?

My memory is faithful: it is armed
With those remembrances that shall
cut deep as sickles.
It reckons up the murders you and yours
have done,
It knows the soul you bear, and it defies
you
To be but honest, loyal, just,
Or, without vice, strong in your
strength.
But I forget myself to thus instruct
you,
Knowing that you will turn again
To weave your spiders' webs of twisted
perfidy.
Treachery is a sacred thing
For all of you: it holds you, hunts you,
binds you up
Within a monstrous and most fatal forfeiture.

THE CONSUL. You have then no confidence?

HÉRÉNIEN. None.

THE CONSUL. Then, I retire. [*The* CONSUL *rises to leave*]

HÉRÉNIEN. I wait. . . . [*The* CONSUL *hesitates, takes two steps, and changes his mind*]

THE CONSUL. Come, it would be folly to let our words get the better of our deeds. Oppidomagne alone should occupy us.

HÉRÉNIEN. I had no other thought when I received you here.

THE CONSUL. A man of affairs and intelligence, such as you are, knows better than anyone how we have spread

abroad the name and influence of Oppidomagne.
Its history is the history of its Regents
And of its Consuls, who, 'neath skies of flaming gold,
Across red soil that lighted up with blood,
Unto the end of the world,
Drew after them its host with their magnetic hand.
Our troubles, in these times, were many and were fruitful.
The people and its leaders both
Were rivals in the battle-field. And those,
Yonder, who threaten and lay siege to us,
Know what a crimson and triumphant fluttering,
Once, our insatiate flags,
Flung to the winds upon their plains of snow.
Oppidomagne is splendid in the eyes of all,
Oppidomagne is vaster than the memory
The sea and earth and wind and sun have kept of it;
Crime, and the noble deeds of war, divide its glory;
You only see, you only speak, its crimes.

HÉRÉNIEN. Your glory is all ended, it has stooped to earth;
With its illustrious sword itself has slain the right;
To-day another glory comes about,
Another rises in my breast,
Perfect and strong and virginal of stain.

And this glory is made up of the new and profound justice, of private heroism, of ardent tenacity, of necessary and temporary violence. It is less brilliant than yours, but surer. The whole world awaits it. Both of us, you with fear and I with fervour, feel it to be inevitable and imminent. That is why you come to me; that is why I have the temerity to treat you as though you were already conquered. Do what you will, you and your caste, you are, at this moment, the prisoners of my consent or my refusal.

THE CONSUL. You mistake . . .

HÉRÉNIEN. No! Like me, you know well that you can do nothing without my aid. In my hands, I hold all the deep moral force of Oppidomagne.

THE CONSUL. You forget what the ruin of an empire would mean. All the ancient interests, all the customs of ages, sustain it. And we have with us the army.

HÉRÉNIEN. The army? say rather, the chiefs; for the soldiers hesitate or protest. They are on the eve of joining the people. They are my hope and your fear. If they all obeyed you, if you did not fear an immense insurrection, the people and the soldiers together, you would have already bombarded the Aventine. [*A silence*] Well, you come to ask me, do you not, to go up yonder, to the mountain, among the tombs, and enjoin on those oppressed people to come down into the midst of those who have enslaved them. Oh! I see all the danger and the peril of my mission!

THE CONSUL. You are mistaken. The Regency begs you to announce that the hour has come when perils are so great as to overcome all rancour. Whoever believes in Oppidomagne should turn hero. Our people has unknown possibilities of regeneration.

HÉRÉNIEN. How would they be treated if they came down from up yonder?

THE CONSUL. The soldiers should return to their proper rank in the army, the others should return to their homes and families. If poverty, since they have left, has crept in, it shall be banished. For the rest, promise what you will: you are loyal. We have confidence in you.

HÉRÉNIEN. Will you sign that for me?

THE CONSUL. It is done. [*Hands him a written paper*] Read. [HÉRÉNIEN *goes over it and appears satisfied*]

HÉRÉNIEN. One last word. When I brought after me the farmers of the villages, the old men and vagabonds of the cities, why were they driven back from the walls, towards the enemy?

THE CONSUL. It was an error. You should have been listened to.

HÉRÉNIEN. And who allowed me to bury my father among his own folk?

THE CONSUL. I myself.

HÉRÉNIEN. Go then, and tell the Regency that I will go to the Aventine.

[HÉRÉNIEN *goes to the window and cries to the* PEOPLE *still standing in the street: "Let the man who comes out of my house pass without a murmur: he has done his duty. . . . To-night, at the cemetery, yonder!"*]

SCENE II. — *At the Aventine (cemetery on a height).* PEOPLE *assembled.* HAINEAU *occupies the tribune: a tomb higher than the others. Stacked arms are planted among the little funereal gardens. Crosses, small pillars, pedestals and columns emerge from among the flowers. On the wall surrounding it armed workmen are on guard. Night is coming on. Fires are lighted.*

HAINEAU. I conclude then, as I concluded yesterday: in a revolution it is essential to strike at ideas in the person of those who represent them. It is essential to go slowly, not to be carried away, and to make for immediate ends. Coldly, each of us will choose his man, his victim. No one shall lie down to rest until the three Regents and the two Consuls of Oppidomagne are dead. It is the work of terror that brings the work of safety.

THE CROWD. — Why proclaim what should be kept quiet?

— Every man is master of his own knife.

— Silence!

HAINEAU. The enemy burns the churches, the banks, the parliaments. The Capitol and the Regency remain. Let us destroy them. Let us go down by night, in bands, into Oppidomagne.

SOMEONE. Impossible, the Aventine is surrounded.

HAINEAU. Someone can always be bought over.

THE CROWD. — What is the use of these massacres?

— One chief dies, and another takes his place.

— We should conquer the whole mass.

HAINEAU. You must cut off his head if you would master the beast. Once upon a time, in Oppidomagne, when we protested among ourselves, who dreamed of half-measures? Then we used to admire those who swept away things and people. Banks and theatres were blown up, and fearless, unflinching, the admirable assassins of old ideas died; they seemed to the judges madmen, but to the people heroes. That was the time of ingenuous sacrifices, tragical decisions, swift executions. Contempt of life swept over the universe. Now to-day everything is flabby and flaccid: energy is like an unstrung bow. We prevaricate, wait, reason, calculate; and you fear Oppidomagne conquered, though you dared it when it was conquering.

THE CROWD. — We love it now that it is beseiged.

— Our wives and children are there still.

— Our strike will come to nothing.

— Let us go back to Oppidomagne.

HAINEAU. When you will anything, you must will it in spite of everything. The hour of the last anguish has come. What matter the sorrows and the sobs of our mothers if, thanks to our sufferings, new life is gained!

SOMEONE [*pointing to* HAINEAU]. He has no children!

HAINEAU. If I had, I would sacrifice them for the future.

SOMEONE. These are only words: you draw back when the time comes for action.

HAINEAU. I have approved myself during the time of the revolt.

SOMEONE. You hid yourself when they were killing the people.

HAINEAU. If I had the thousand arms of a crowd, I would act alone, and I would disdain you. . . . [*Hooting and jostling:* HAINEAU *is dislodged from the tribune*]

A GROUP IN THE CROWD. — There goes another who won't make fools of us any more.

— He is too base and cowardly.

ANOTHER GROUP. — We loathe him, now that we know ourselves better.

— We don't know what we want, now that we want it all together.

— If we don't do something we are lost.

— Let us go back to Oppidomagne. [*The tumult quiets down.* LE BREUX *mounts the tribune*]

LE BREUX. Haineau let himself be carried away for nothing. He accused us of lacking daring. Is not our very presence on this mountain sufficient proof of heroism? At any moment we may be attacked and cut to pieces.

HAINEAU. Take care; you will frighten them.

LE BREUX [*shrugging his shoulders, glancing at* HAINEAU, *and continuing*]. We must not use up, on ourselves and among ourselves, the hate that should strike only Oppidomagne. We have now been here together for a week, and already divisions, jealousies, spite, the hesitation of one, the folly of another, get the better of our mutual understanding, cemented though it was by God

knows what promises! Happily, I have good news for you. The Regency authorizes Hérénien to treat with us, here on the Aventine. [*Showing a written paper*] His letter brings me the announcement.

THE CROWD [*on all sides*]. — Hérénien will see clear. It is he who overcomes all our troubles.

— He knows what to do.

— He will give us back to ourselves.

AN OPPONENT. Must he always be called on?

ANOTHER. We abandon ourselves to him like women.

LE BREUX. You tempt the people by speaking like that.

AN OPPONENT. We open its eyes; we put it on its guard against itself.

LE BREUX. The crowd adores Hérénien. It does not discuss its enthusiasms.

AN OPPONENT. Hérénien is not a God. Why did he leave Oppidomagne on the night of the revolt?

LE BREUX. His father was dying.

AN OPPONENT. His leaving was a mask for his flight. Hérénien pays you to defend him.

LE BREUX. If I was in his pay, you would have been in mine long ago. You have a little low soul which cannot understand a higher one than your own. [*Acclamations*]

SOMEONE. Let us wait for Hérénien.

A YOUNG MAN. I will follow him, but I will kill him if he betrays us.

LE BREUX. I answer for him, as you answer for yourself to yourself. We need Hérénien. We are sure of him. Look yonder. [*There is a movement near the gate of the cemetery*] He is coming. It is only he who is strong enough to unite us and save us.

[*The* CROWD *masses itself on the boundary wall. Long cheering.* HÉRÉNIEN *mounts rapidly on a tomb, and speaks, keeping his eye on* HAINEAU, *who is in front of him*]

HÉRÉNIEN. At last I am with you! You and I are only half alive, when we live apart. At the village where my father died I heard of your exodus to this mountain. I thought of Roman times, of the pride, the decisiveness, the courage, the beauty, of the supreme peoples. Let what may come of it, this dazzling and brutal act will have greatened you. You have proved your combined stubbornness and your single valour. Those that refuse to you, soldiers, your proper pay, to you, citizens, complete justice, because you were the claimants for it, are to-day checkmated. The means you have used were excellent. But will they remain so?

An armed conflict with Oppidomagne would be a disaster. Up to now it has been postponed. Up to now, you have remained bound together in an admirable bond of defence. I affirm, before you all, that you have been proud to live together, thanks to your clear and mutual goodwill. You have realized that the future depended upon your attitude. That is well. [*Silence. All heads are bowed*] But will this union maintain itself, in the midst of the misery and the famine that will break out here? [*General silence.* HAINEAU *shrugs his shoulders.* HÉRÉNIEN *gathers that there has been a dispute. Suddenly changing his tone*] You were, I admit, in terrible straits. From the height of this mountain of death, certainly, you dominated those whom you detested. But your hearths and homes were wanting; your wives were wanting, your sons, your daughters. The Regency held them in its grasp, already impatient to crush them out. Ah! you have suffered the interminable passing of black hours, the long and slow procession of anguish after anguish through the soul! Happily all may be changed. The Regency offers you peace.

HAINEAU. Never will we parley with the Regents.

HÉRÉNIEN. If you refuse to parley, the massacre begins. What! we are a handful of enthusiasts here, whose action will decide the lot of a people; we are on the eve of an enormous victory for the people, and we consent to die like a rat in a trap. [*Cheers*]

HAINEAU. Everything that comes from the Regency must be rejected without consideration.

HÉRÉNIEN. Everything that it offers must be considered, and used for our own advantage. What matter the danger of the means! I am a man who would use the thunder itself! [*Cheers*]

HAINEAU. We shall be your dupes.

HÉRÉNIEN. What do you know of my designs, of my hopes, of my life? You disorganize: I organize. Those who listen to you waste themselves in defiances, in plots, in terrorizings. For a week now you have been using your utmost rigour: you have achieved a nullity, mere disputes. I come and I

find your work paltry. I am ashamed of it. [*Cheers*]

HAINEAU. I will have no tyrant. [*Hooting*]

HÉRÉNIEN. You would become one, if I let you. [*Cheers*]

HAINEAU. You overturn the Regency only to usurp its place.

HÉRÉNIEN. Its place! I might have taken it: I disdained it. [*Cheers*]

HAINEAU. You consent to the most dubious compromises, you traffic . . .

HÉRÉNIEN. Silence! Not a word more! This debate shall not descend to personal questions. [*Addressing himself directly to the* CROWD] I hate the authorities to such a degree that I do not so much as dictate to you the conditions of peace. You yourselves shall impose them upon the Regency. Speak. [*Cheers*]

SOMEONE. We want to be treated as men. We have used our rights in striking for them.

HÉRÉNIEN. Perfect.

ANOTHER. We want our goods to be restored to us.

HÉRÉNIEN. Promised.

ANOTHER. We want the arrears of wages to be paid to workmen.

HÉRÉNIEN. The Regency agrees to it.

ANOTHER. We want to re-enter the town under arms.

HÉRÉNIEN. You may. And I add: if confiscations have taken place during your absence, they shall be annulled. All condemnations shall be forgotten. You yourselves shall be the judges of those who have judged you. [*Cheers*] And now that we are in agreement, tell me: would it not have been monstrous that men of the same soil should have cut one another's throats? Think: yonder, in the feverous streets of the old quarters, in the atmosphere of powder and conflagration, disabled folk have taken refuge, in an immense hope of some renewal. More and more it is our programmes that they discuss, our discourses that they comment on, our soul that they drink in. The army itself is in a ferment with our dreams. Every discontent, every grudge, every injustice, every oppression, every enslavement, takes an unknown voice to make itself heard! Our masters hate each other. They have no more strength. They obey a phantom. [*Acquiescence from all sides*] Among the enemy, the same confusion, the same weakness. Mutinies break out among the soldiers. There are revolts against the cruelty of chiefs, against the horrors and follies of the campaign. Storms of hatred arise. Sick of nameless dreads, distresses, and miseries, all long after the necessary union of man with man. They are ashamed to be butchers of their fellows. And now, if this conflagration of instincts could be extinguished; if our besiegers could be made to feel that they would find brotherly souls among us; if by a sudden understanding we might realize to-day a little of the great human dream, Oppidomagne would be forgiven for all its shame, its folly, its blasphemy; it would become the place in the world where one of the few sacred events had happened. It is with this thought that you must all follow me down, towards your children. [*Cheers*]

THE CROWD. — He is the only one who makes things move.

— Without him, our cause was lost.

SOMEONE [*speaking directly to* HÉRÉNIEN]. We will all obey you; you, you are our master.

[*Cheers. They hoist* HÉRÉNIEN *on their shoulders, and carry him towards the city.* LE BREUX *escorts him. All descend. Cries of triumph are heard*]

ACT III

SCENE I. — *A fortnight after.*

Abode of HÉRÉNIEN, *the same as in the second act. The worktable, covered with papers, is near the window, in which panes are broken. In the streets, the* CROWD *comes and goes, retires to a distance and returns; groups cry: "Down with the traitor!" "Death to the traitor!" "Death to him!" "Down with him!"*

CLAIRE. And now this has lasted for a fortnight! The house seems like a ship in distress. Billows of rage and shouting beat upon it. Oh! that accursed affair on the Aventine! To have fallen all of a sudden from the height of enthusiasm, into disgrace and hate! [HAINEAU *enters rapidly*]

CLAIRE. You! here!

HAINEAU. Yes, I.

CLAIRE. What do you want?

HAINEAU. You don't know then of my speech in the "Old Market"? I expected a better welcome.

CLAIRE [*pointing to* HÉRÉNIEN'S *room*]. What, you! his adversary and his enemy! [*Pointing to the street*] You who stir up those cries and uproars!

HAINEAU. By this time, after what he must know, Hérénien will receive me better than you, my friend and my sister.

CLAIRE. I do not understand.

HAINEAU. You will understand soon. Meanwhile, tell me, what was he like during these days of vain and miserable rage?

CLAIRE. Oh, do not think he is overcome! He is still splendidly erect; he is carrying out the boldest of projects: he will reconcile Oppidomagne with the enemy.

HAINEAU [*pointing to the street*]. But these uproars at his door?

CLAIRE. At first, it was hard. It was useless for me to espouse his furies, envelop him with my fervour, wait upon him better than ever: he called up all his old grudges, he stirred himself up to anger, he rushed to the window, shook his fist at the city, shouted with rage, and the tears started from his eyes. In all his violence he was the terrible child that you know.

HAINEAU. Ah! if he had only listened to me, we should never have fallen out. The Regency would not have deceived him. The people would love him still. But he is not to be disciplined; he has never known what it is to will patiently. He goes by bounds and tempests, like the winds of his country.

CLAIRE. And what ought he to have done?

HAINEAU. Prolonged the revolt on the Aventine; extended it instead of reducing it, accepted the civic conflict, made the misery sharper; seized the banks by force; the public services by force; destiny, by force.

CLAIRE. It was impossible.

HAINEAU. Everything was possible, in the state of fever in which we were. But there had to be a plan, a resolution coldly taken and followed. First, we should have organized the resistance: we were on strike, up yonder; then the attack; then the massacre. It was the immediate, definite, urgent things that needed seeing to. Those in authority would have been assassinated: Regent and Consuls. They were beginning to listen to me. Hérénien came to the Aventine at an unlucky moment: circumstances were in his favour. He is the sentimental tribune in speaking, big gestures, big words: he magnetises, he does not convince. Ah! when I think of it, all my hatred comes back to me.

CLAIRE. How you deceive yourself!

[*Clamours in the street.* HAINEAU *and* CLAIRE *pay no heed to them*]

HAINEAU. He seems not to know what he wants himself. He always looks beyond the hour. I never understand him.

CLAIRE. I always understand him.

HAINEAU. It is a mistake to put all his will into the service of certain dreams. He who blows down the tube too hard breaks the glass.

CLAIRE. Don't let us discuss things. You are violent, and you feel that you are weak and ill at ease. If you are here, in his house, it is to ask for something. What is it?

HAINEAU [*with pride*]. I have come here to tell you that yesterday, I, I who am now speaking, overcame the crowd, defended Hérénien, made them cheer him. My tenacity has conquered his ill-luck.

CLAIRE. You have done that, you? But how then does your conduct go with your ideas?

HAINEAU. Ah, it is like this! When I act for myself, I am a failure, I am betrayed, I am hated, Le Breux supplants me; in short, Hérénien, in spite of all, is the only man who can save things, at the point they have reached. He has ravelled them, let him unravel them.

CLAIRE. And you, you have sustained him?

HAINEAU. Certainly, because we cannot have the revolt over again, because everything crumbles through my fingers, because I have no chance, no luck. If I could only tell you how childish the people are, and how they are already regretting that they have no master! Oh! it is all over, it is all over! and one ought to have the strength to disappear.

CLAIRE. It is in despair then that you sustain my man?

HAINEAU. What does it matter? [*Taking his hat and stick and preparing to go*] Good-bye, you know now what you ought to know. When Hérénien comes down, prepare him to see me.

[*He goes out. Renewed tempest of howls and cries.* HÉRÉNIEN *enters*]

CLAIRE [*pointing towards the* CROWD]. People must be wicked when the best of them become savage so soon.

HÉRÉNIEN. Come, have patience. I am as tenacious as the peasant my father. Yesterday, these cries pursued me through the whole house, they beat against the walls from top to bottom, from cellar to attic, everywhere, like alarm-bells. I felt a rage creeping over me, I would like to have strangled them, stamped them to bits, annihilated them. I was in a fever of hate. I answered their nameless rages with insults. To-day, I feel quite firm. [*Unfolding a letter*] Listen, this is what has been sent to me: "I can now give you a definite assurance. All the officers are now won over to our cause and will follow us: some out of spite, others out of envy, all out of disgust. We came to an understanding yesterday in a secret meeting. I hold them in my hand. They will obey me like the pen with which I write to you, like the man who carries you this letter. Through them the whole army is ours. The generals? They are too far off, too high; the soldiers are hardly aware of them: they may be overlooked." [*Folding the letter*] And this letter comes to me from Hordain, the captain of the enemy.

[*Fresh outbreak of cries: "Death to him!" "Down with him!"*]

CLAIRE. My friend!

HÉRÉNIEN. Well, let them cry on! As for that, I foresaw that the Regency, when it promised everything, when it gave up everything, kept the half up its sleeves, like the jugglers in fairs. It was the maddest thing to go to the Aventine! But I had to have the people, I had to have my people and its fervour, before I could make terms with the besiegers.

CLAIRE. How reasonable you are now!

HÉRÉNIEN. The Regency fooled me perfectly! Those vacuous and bedizened folk, measuring my ambition by their own, came here, to offer me a block of its ruined power: as if men like me did not conquer their own place, for themselves, in the sight of all. They went out of that door like beaten lackeys, and since then my loss has enfuriated them. They have only a few days more to live, and there is nothing but their rage for my downfall to keep their thoughts from their own death-agony. Ah! if the people knew! All the appearances are against me. I believed in a poor scrap of writing, a mere signature, scratched out with the same pen that set it down. The more the Regency has broken its promises, the more I seem to have broken mine. Really, they might believe me a guilty accomplice.

CLAIRE. It is the people that is. You have only been able to deceive them because you were deceived yourself. The innocence of all you have done blinds them. Ah! I have my own idea. The masses are as suspicious, as malignant, as ungrateful, as stupid, as those who govern them. They will never admit that anyone can be simply pure and great.

HÉRÉNIEN. I forbid you to think that.

CLAIRE. You said it yourself yesterday.

HÉRÉNIEN. Oh! I, that is different. [*Pause*] The people loves me, and I love it, despite all, through all. What is happening now is only a lover's quarrel.

[*Insulting shouts in the street*]

CLAIRE. They are there by their thousands insulting us. And those are the same mouths that cheered you! Ah! the cowards! the wretches! the madmen!

[*Renewed tempest of cries*]

HÉRÉNIEN. Indeed, one might think they had never known me. [*Going towards the window with clenched fists*] Oh! those brutes! those brutes! those brutes! [*Then, returning to his desk*] And yet yesterday, at the meeting in the Old Market, they all cheered me. Haineau defended me with such fervour that I forgive him all. Le Breux came to me to-night with the most reassuring news. The duplicity of the Regents is becoming clearer and clearer. All Oppidomagne returns to its true master. My hour has come again. Has it not? [*Impatiently*] Has it not, then?

CLAIRE. There is good hope of it.

HÉRÉNIEN. No, no, but there is certainty!

Despite these heady cries, despite their multitude,
I can divine already such a flock of hands
All bending to my strength, to me, to-morrow!
My past returns again, and fills their minds,

In a great flood of memories
And in a foam of glory. [*As if speaking to himself*]
I hold the future fast, in these two hands of mine:
Those who withstand,
And those who put their trust in me,
Deep in their conscience know it, all of them.
That noble dream which is made flesh in me,
Now more than ever, spurs me on to live;
These are the times and these the hours that fire my soul.
What are these cries to me, these clamours on the wind,
And these unterrifying storms?
Only the future, in my mind,
Far stronger and more real than the present, lives!

CLAIRE [*pointing to the street*]. If they could only see you, how they would be won by your confidence!
My friend, you make of me
The proudest woman on earth,
And I abase myself and lose myself in your great soul;
Take, take this kiss I give to you,
Take it, and bear it where you go,
As a clear shining weapon bear it!
There are few men upon the earth
That ever took
A deeper and a truer one than this!

HÉRÉNIEN. If my own self were to forsake me, I should find myself again in you, my force has passed so into your heart! But I am so unshaken in my destiny that nothing which is happening now seems to me real. I believe in surprise, chance, the unknown. [*Pointing to the street*] Let them howl on! they are preparing their repentance.

[*The tumult grows greater. Blows are heard on the door below. Window-panes are smashed*]

HÉRÉNIEN. If they go on knocking, I will open.

CLAIRE. It would be mad.

HÉRÉNIEN. There have been moments when my mere presence meant victory! Never have I repelled them, when they approached my threshold.

[HÉRÉNIEN *thrusts aside* CLAIRE, *who tries to stop him, rushes to the window, opens it, and plants himself there with his arms folded. The uproar becomes quieter, then stops, and there is silence. Suddenly, at a distance, other cries are heard: "Down with the Regency! Down with the firebrands! Long live Hérénien!"*]

HÉRÉNIEN. At last! There is the true people! The people that cheered me at the Old Market! My heart never deceived me. It heard when my ears were still deaf.

[*There is a swaying and jostling in the* CROWD, *contradictory outcries, then, slowly, quietude*]

CLAIRE [*at the window*]. Le Breux is going to speak. Listen.

HÉRÉNIEN [*impatiently*]. I want to speak myself.

LE BREUX [*in the street*]. Hérénien was sincere and just. [*Murmurs*] There are five hundred of you howling at him, and there is not one of you whom he has not helped. [*Murmurs*] As for me, he extricated me from the very talons of the consular judges. Last year, he battled to deliver Haineau. And you, all of you? he saved you in the time of tragic and famishing strikes, he . . .

HÉRÉNIEN [*impatiently*]. I have no need of a defender. [*Addressing* LE BREUX, *who speaks in the street*] I must take the people: I must not have them given to me.

THE CROWD. — Let him speak.

— Down with him! death to him! He is a traitor!

— Let him speak!

— Death to him! Down with him! He is bought!

— Silence! [*Quiet is restored*]

HAINEAU [*in the street*]. I, Charles Haineau, suspected Jacques Hérénien. He seemed to me a man to be doubted. Like you, I opposed him. To-day, I regret it.

THE CROWD [*contradictorily*]. Long live Hérénien! Death to him! Down with him!

HAINEAU. The Regency sent emissaries amongst us: I surprised them yesterday at the meeting in the Old Market: they were urging other wretches to kill Jacques Hérénien, to pillage his house, to pretend that it was the vengeance of the people.

THE CROWD. — Death to the Regents!

— Long live the people of Oppidomagne!

— Long live Hérénien!

HAINEAU. We need Hérénien.

THE CROWD. — Why did he receive dubious messages?

— Why did he leave our meetings?
— He is a despot.
— He is a martyr.
— Let him defend himself.
— Silence!
— May he forgive us!

HÉRÉNIEN. Forgive you, yes: for a man such as I am is not doubted; for the Regency of Oppidomagne deceives as easily as I take breath. Bit by bit, the fine front of its authority is chipped away; rag by rag the fine cloak of its power falls from its shoulders. It called on me to sew together the pieces. It dispatched me to the Aventine, with the design of monopolizing or ruining me. The mission was difficult, dangerous, tempting. I acquitted myself of it as of a duty, and to-day I am neither lost to you nor gained by it; I am, and I remain, free; as always, I set my strength to serve my supreme idea. [*Some cheers*] Just now I heard cries of "Bought! Bought!" [*Turning and seizing a bundle of papers on his desk*] "Bought!" What have they not done that I should not be! [*Brandishing a roll of papers*] In this handful of letters they have promised me everything that infamy can abandon to an apostate, corruption to a traitor. That you may touch and handle the cynicism, the policy, the perfidy, the baseness, the blindness of the Regency, I hand over to you their letters. They were all accompanied by pressing demands, they were all the prologue of more ardent solicitations, all of them contain no more than the shadow of the infamies that came out in personal interviews. What they dared not write, they said; what they dared not endorse, they impressed; what they dared not formulate, they hinted. They returned to the attack, after each failure; they answered refusals by bigger offers. Finally, they gave up all pride. I needed but to have opened my hand, to seize the whole power, and personify, in my own person, all the past. Ah! truly I wonder at myself when I think with what violence this fist remained clenched. And now for the letters, read them yourselves. [*He throws them to the* CROWD] Talk them over, share them amongst you, spread them to the four winds of Oppidomagne. The immense ruin of the Regency is in them. You will understand all. As for me, I rest all my security on the insane imprudence of disarming myself; I am lost, for ever, willingly, joyously, in the eyes of the Consuls; I offer them the most unforgettable of insults and I take refuge in your justice. Henceforth, it is you who protect my life. [*Cries of enthusiasm*] I may be attacked, on any side. Am I not the shining target, at which all the arrows are aimed? Swear to me then, — no matter what the calumny that may be reported, no matter what the fable, foolish or looking like truth, that may be invented — swear to follow me, with eyes shut, but with assured heart. [*They swear, and cheer*] It should be our joy and our pride to belong to one another, to hate, to love, and to think as one. [*Cheers*] I will be your soul, and you my arms. And together we shall realize such splendid conquests of humanity, that seeing them, thanks to us, living and shining in their very eyes, men shall date time from the day of our victory. [*Cheers; then calm;* HÉRÉNIEN *adds*] And now, I request Vincent Le Breux and Charles Haineau to join me here. I wish no faintest difference to exist between us. [*Renewed cheers.* HÉRÉNIEN *turns and goes up to* CLAIRE, *who embraces him*] You see now that we should never despair of the people. [*After a silence*] Tell our emissary from Hordain to come here immediately.

[HAINEAU *and* LE BREUX *enter.* CLAIRE *goes out*]

LE BREUX. This is victory!

HAINEAU. Oh! you are really a master. When I fight against you I am without force; I am worth a thousand, when I am by your side.

HÉRÉNIEN. Well, this time at least, our good old Regency seems finally stuck in its own mud. [*Sitting down*] Despite all its promises and oaths, no help was given to the household of any of the revolters. It assigned our men to the most dangerous posts: manipulation of the powder and explosives. The enemy's bombs fell into their midst as they worked. Lists of suspected persons were drawn up: each of the military leaders had his own.

LE BREUX. You must regret your action at the Aventine.

HÉRÉNIEN. Come now! [*Turning sharply to* HAINEAU] Do you know, Charles Haineau, what I planned out while you were urging these storms of revolt against me?

HAINEAU. Master, believe that all that, my part in it . . .

HÉRÉNIEN. Do not excuse yourself, do not interrupt; have I not forgotten everything? Yes, over the heads and the thousand arms of this now conquered outbreak, I realized the boldest dream of my life, the one for which alone I exist. [*Rising suddenly*] In less than three days the enemy will enter Oppidomagne peacefully and we shall welcome them.

HAINEAU. It is impossible.

HÉRÉNIEN. The Regent's men have never ceased tempting me. I have discussed patiently with them, questioning, illusioning them, asking for guarantees and confidences; giving them hope and taking it from them in turn, worming out all their secrets; opposing, to their senile tactics, my abruptness and my anger. I played with them audaciously, madly; and I know now, better than anyone, better especially than they themselves, how inevitable and how close is their ruin. Their treasury? Empty. Their munition? Exhausted. Their garners? Ransacked. No more bread for the siege; no more money for the defence. They are asking in what waste, what orgies, fortunes and public supplies have disappeared. Everyone accuses everybody.

The army? The day before yesterday five battalions refused to march. The ring-leaders were condemned to death. They were led to the place of execution: not a soldier would fire upon them: they are alive yet. [*Cheers in the street: "Long live Hérénien!"*] At the council, the Consuls squabble. Does one propose a plan? his neighbour opposes it, details his own, and wants that to be adopted. A week since, the ministers decided on a general sortie by the Gate of Rome; they succeeded in getting it voted: not a Consul would put himself at the head of the troops. Each Regent has sent me his emissary: these old men are not even agreed between themselves. They are like poor caged screech-owls, whose perches are turned round. They lose their heads, cry out, and close their eyes against the fire of day. They cast at one another the stupidities, faults, and crimes, for which they are afraid to take the responsibility. "What is to be done?" becomes the motto of their reign.

CLAIRE [*entering*]. The emissary has come.

HÉRÉNIEN. Let him come in. [*Turning towards* HAINEAU *and* LE BREUX] I have shown you the situation as it is among us in the city; you shall judge of what it is like among the enemy. Then you will see that war is no longer possible. [*Presenting the* EMISSARY *to* LE BREUX *and* HAINEAU] Here is one I am sure of. He knows, more than any of us, as to the state of mind of both armies. [*To the* EMISSARY] Tell them what you have discovered. [HÉRÉNIEN *walks to and fro in the room*]

THE EMISSARY. Last Tuesday night my brother was sent to reconnoitre at the outposts. He went on a long way, to find out if the intrenchment that we had bombarded had given way, and would give us the chance of a general sortie from the Gate of Rome.

HÉRÉNIEN [*interrupting*]. That is the sortie I told you of.

THE EMISSARY [*continuing*]. All at once, in the dark, a voice calls out, but gently, as if afraid of frightening him and driving him away. A few quick, friendly words are exchanged. He is asked if there are not really in Oppidomagne responsible men who have had enough of the war.

HÉRÉNIEN [*quickly*]. That happened two days ago, and since then there have been many similar colloquies.

THE EMISSARY. My brother answers that Oppidomagne will defend itself, that the revolt against this mutual slaughter must come, not from the conquered, but from the conquerors. And other soldiers come up, and say the besiegers are tired out, that deserters are endless, that rebellions are breaking out every day, that there is no longer an army, that they will have to raise the siege, if the frightful epidemic which decimates the troops continues. They want the union of all the miseries against all the powers.

HÉRÉNIEN. Well, who then, after such an affirmation of human solidarity, would dare affirm that the conscience of men remains unchanged?

O these first trembling confidences that come
By night, between the perilous dark
And the terrors of war and its despair;
These first confessions of the true soul of man,
Lucid at last and triumphing,

The passionless stars
On high must rejoice to hear them!

HAINEAU. Truly, I admire you! At the tiniest glimmer that reaches you through the crack of a door, you are certain of the immense presence of the sun. Since Oppidomagne was blockaded, has a day passed, a single day, without traps being laid for you? Who guarantees you the sincerity of the soldiers? Who tells you that Oppidomagne will open its walls, even to unarmed enemies? You believe everything, like a blind man. The force that animates you is as insensate as it is ardent!

HÉRÉNIEN. It is the only true one: be in the service of circumstances, hold oneself at the mercy of the immense hope that thrills through the whole world to-day!

HAINEAU. You believe then that the enemy will abdicate its victory, and accept peace without profit?

HÉRÉNIEN. You reason without knowledge. The vagabonds and the peasants, who at the beginning of the siege were driven back into the country, and who live, God knows how, between the besiegers and us, have given me tidings day by day. Hordain confirms what they have said, and I have checked everything. The bombardment was bound to cease. The epidemic devours the camp: twenty thousand men are dead; the moats of the entrenchment overflow with corpses. A general was killed yesterday by a soldier, who had suddenly gone mad. The lower ranks league together to destroy the works of the siege: they spike the cannon, they throw balls and powder into the river. It is thus universal misery, distress, sorrows, tears, rages, terrors, that bring about these hopes of fellowship, these deep and fraternal cries. The very force of things is in accord with ours.

LE BREUX. You are wonderful! You were thought to be overcome, and now you are preparing for a more gigantic enterprise than ever.

HÉRÉNIEN. It is because I have faith, a faith capable of communicating itself to the whole world. I see myself, I feel myself, I multiply myself, in others; I assimilate them to me. The army of Oppidomagne is in my hands; that of the enemy obeys Hordain, my disciple and my fanatic. We have both worked with enthusiasm. Of what use is ancient wisdom, prudent, systematic, buried in books? It forms part of the humanity of yesterday; mine dates from to-day. [*To the* EMISSARY] Go and tell those who will be at the outposts this evening that I shall be with them. You will give notice to Hordain.

[*Cheers in the street. The* SOLDIER *goes out*]

HÉRÉNIEN [*to* HAINEAU *and* LE BREUX]. Will you come with me? Come, tell me quickly.

LE BREUX. Assuredly.

HÉRÉNIEN [*to* HAINEAU]. And you?

HAINEAU. As long as the leaders live, they may do harm. As long as they have arms, they will kill. They will be the reaction which will follow your victory. Suppress them first.

HÉRÉNIEN. They will be the past, powerless and annihilated. Come, will you go with me?

HAINEAU. No.

HÉRÉNIEN. Good, we will do great things without you.

[*Renewed cheering in the street.* HÉRÉNIEN *leans out of the window, and is cheered*]

LE BREUX [*to* HAINEAU]. He always astonishes me. He sees the obstacle, as you and I do. On what prodigies does he rely to overcome it? And how he carries one along in the whirlwind of his tempest!

HAINEAU. That man has on his side the unknown forces of life. [*After a pause*] I shall go with him, after all.

SCENE II. — *Ruined house. Night, at the outposts. On one side, rising ground and entrenchments; on the other, the distant walls of Oppidomagne, faintly lit up.* LE BREUX *is sitting on a heap of stones; before him an* OFFICER *of the enemy, and some* SOLDIERS. *Silent* GROUPS *arrive.*

LE BREUX. In Oppidomagne, regents, judges, leading men, all are at the mercy of the people. They are unconscious of the eminence of their defeat, and imagine that they still govern. But what Hérénien wishes will come to pass.

THE OFFICER. Among us, no one dares punish any more. All the links that bound us to our leaders and to our kings have been snapped. We, the inferiors and the poor, are the masters. To think that after twenty months of campaigning, after taking six provinces, and ten strongholds, we should collapse before your disorganized capital!

LE BREUX. Will Hordain come?

THE OFFICER. I expect him.

LE BREUX. I am curious to see him. I do not know him.

THE OFFICER. He is fifty, he is a mere captain. It was during the dull and stormy winters of our country of ice, in the grey and snowy boredom of a little garrison town, that he won me over to his will and to his faith. He would sit down, at night, at my chimney corner, under my lamp; and we would argue. The works of Hérénien had enlightened him; they were my light. Hordain explained them to me, commented on them, with a conviction so profound, that nothing seemed to me more self-evident in human thought and justice. Ah! those friendly and ardent evenings together! You will never know, you people of Oppidomagne, what miracles can be wrought by a book on the grave, unsatisfied and profound souls of a country of shadow and solitude!

[HORDAIN *and* HÉRÉNIEN *arrive almost at the same moment, from opposite directions; they are accompanied by* OFFICERS *and* SOLDIERS]

HORDAIN. I come to you, proud to know you. There is not an idea which we do not share.

HÉRÉNIEN. I knew by your letters that I could put all my trust in you. Both of us have our lives at stake, both of us love one another for the sake of the same profound and magnificent idea; And what then if they call us traitors?
Never have we beheld our souls
More proud, more firm, more masters
Of all the future. We stand here,
Hardy and clear, and face to face;
Do we not bring two nations peace?
Do we not work at good with our rebellious hands?
And conscience cries to us: Well done!

HORDAIN. Truly, my soul is more peaceful than on a battle-eve! All the words that justify this understanding between us have been said centuries ago.

HÉRÉNIEN. If it were miracles we wanted, they would rise on every hand. The air we breathe, the horizons we behold, the fever that beats in our foreheads, the great burning of which each of us is but a flame, foretell the new justice.

HORDAIN. My propaganda was incessant. First, absolutely secret. Then, the general watchfulness was relaxed to such a point that my prudence became a mere luxury. Since the Marshal Hardenz, the only real leader we had, fell into disgrace, our army exists no longer. Without understanding anything definite, our soldiers gather what is in the air. An order! and they would all go towards Oppidomagne, happy, confiding, and fraternal. A number of the dead generals were replaced by captains, of whom some are ours. It is only the very old leaders who seem to me impossible to win over. They would be a danger, if we did not act without delay, sharply, to-morrow.

HAINEAU. How to-morrow? But time to prepare . . .

HÉRÉNIEN. We must act like a thunder-clap.

HAINEAU. But still, it is urgent that Oppidomagne should know what we want.

HÉRÉNIEN. She guesses it. To-morrow, she shall know it.

HAINEAU. But it is impossible to move thousands of men, to throw open the gates of a city, without taking measures and assuring ourselves of every chance of success.

HÉRÉNIEN. All the measures are taken; all the chances are in my hand. You alone hesitate and tremble; you have no faith, you are afraid to believe.

HORDAIN. This then is what I propose: to-morrow, as soon as it becomes dark, at seven o'clock, those who are here and all our friends give orders to their men to march peacefully towards Oppidomagne. At that moment, all the leaders who remain to us will be assembled to feast their first victory. My brother, with three battalions which are ours, will mount guard over their debauch. The movement of troops will start from the east, and go in the direction both of the gate of Rome and of Babylon: it will reach them in an hour.

HÉRÉNIEN. The gate of Rome is too near the Palace and the Regency. The first part of the troops must enter by the gate of Babylon, and spread through the quarters of the people. Ah! you will see what our people are like, how they will receive you, cheer for you, breathe into you a stormy and courageous soul. You will pass on your way two barracks, the soldiers of which will join yours; and you will be in the heart of the city while the Regency is still deaf and sleeping. Only then will you pre-

sent yourselves at the gate of Rome. The consternation of our masters and their partisans will be in your favor. Only the five hundred consular guards will remain faithful to them. All the other troops lodged in the Palace will receive you with enthusiasm. If there is any fighting between the guards and us, leave our men to settle the affair. Keep out of any sort of quarrel. You need not fire a single shot.

HORDAIN. We will do scrupulously what you tell us to do.

HÉRÉNIEN. It is only you, the conquerors, who could realize our dream. Revolutions always begin by the renunciation of a privilege: you renounce victory.

AN OFFICER. It was only our King who wanted war.

HAINEAU. Ah, and truly your attack was unjust, your beginning of the campaign . . .

HORDAIN [*interrupting*]. For the last time, let us have things quite clear. My brother will look after the leaders. At eight o'clock three thousand men will enter by the gate of Babylon. Then the gate of Rome opens to let in more battalions. No trumpets, no flags, not a shot fired, no singing. The entry will be sudden, peaceful, and silent. Is that it?

HÉRÉNIEN. Perfect; we will see to the rest. Oppidomagne is ready; she awaits you. In an hour you will have the whole city yours.

And now, let us separate; do not leave time for objections to come forward, they are weakening, enervating. Our sole tactics shall be: sudden, and bold! Till to-morrow, then, yonder!

[*They shake hands and separate.* HORDAIN *and* HÉRÉNIEN *embrace*]

ACT IV

SCENE I. — *Abode of* HÉRÉNIEN. *Same as in first and second acts. The* CHILD *is playing.* CLAIRE *stands anxiously at the window.*

THE CHILD. What dress shall I put on Polichinelle?

CLAIRE. The prettiest.

THE CHILD. Is it a holiday?

CLAIRE. The finest holiday of all.

THE CHILD. Is it Christmas?

CLAIRE. It is Easter, the real Easter: the first there has ever been in the world.

THE CHILD. May I go, if it is a holiday?

CLAIRE. It is a holiday for grown-up people; a holiday that children don't understand.

THE CHILD. Tell me what it is.

CLAIRE. You will know, one day. You can say then that it is your father, your own father, who made it.

THE CHILD. Will there be lots of flags?

CLAIRE. Lots.

THE CHILD. Then why do you say I should not understand? When there are flags, I always understand.

CLAIRE [*from the window*]. At last!

[HÉRÉNIEN *enters with clothes in disorder.* CLAIRE *rushes towards him*]

HÉRÉNIEN [*embracing her feverishly*]. You know all?

CLAIRE. I guess, without knowing. Tell me.

HÉRÉNIEN. Things never happen as one imagines they are going to. I was convinced that none of our chiefs would be at the Gate of Babylon: they never are. Yesterday evening, the oldest of them went there. When they saw the enemy at hand, they thought it was an act of sheer madness. It was not an attack: the order of the troops, the absence of commanders, the lack of organization, proved it. It was not parleyers: there were too many.

When the troops were a hundred yards away, some threw away their arms, others raised the butt ends of their muskets. Without a word, some of our men ran and opened the gates. Our chiefs struggled, shouted, stormed, all together: no one listened to their abuse nor to their orders. All the presentiments they had had, all the fears of defection, of treason, which they dared not admit, must have stabbed and tortured and prostrated them. In a lightning-flash, they understood all. They were surrounded. Three of them were killed: they were brave men. They saw the enemy enter Oppidomagne; they believed it meant defeat, the shame of the last humiliation. Some wept. Our men flung themselves into the arms of the besiegers. There was hand-shaking, embracing. A sudden joy flashed through the souls of all. Swords, knapsacks, cartridges were thrown away. The enemy, whose wine-

skins were full, offered drink. And the flood, always bigger and bigger, flows on towards the city and the National Square; our chiefs stand there, pale, mute, incredulous. "It is the end of the war," cried Le Breux, in the ear of a commander. "There is neither victory nor defeat: it is holiday." Thereupon the brute began to swear, mad with rage, striking out blindly with his sabre, wounding his horse. Two of his neighbours fled in the midst of the confusion. They went in the direction of the Regency: they will organize perhaps a semblance of resistance, and the consular guard will second them. I have already seen their green uniforms roving about near here.

CLAIRE. But the generals of the enemy?

HÉRÉNIEN. Oh! they are the prisoners of their own army. Yesterday, seeing the troops reduced to half by sickness and desertion, they wanted, in their last despair, to make a great assault. The soldiers refused to advance; some of them fired on their leaders. That ended everything.

CLAIRE. I have heard the troops pouring into Oppidomagne; it is like the sound of the sea. Never was I at once so happy and so trembling.

HÉRÉNIEN. Twenty thousand men are now in our midst. Tables are set up in the squares. All those who, during the siege, had hidden away victuals in their cellars, distribute them to the people. Haineau said: "Never will Oppidomagne abase itself to the point of receiving its enemies; never will Oppidomagne permit them to walk about its streets and squares; never will the prejudices of humiliated Oppidomagne be effaced." One reasons in that way in normal times: but to-day!

There is such a confusion in accepted ideas that one could found new religions and proclaim new beliefs. Look, up there, on the heights, the Capitol is in flames! They are burning down the palaces of the Artillery and of the Navy. Before to-night, all the reserves of arms and ammunitions will have been served out.

During the siege, justice made for itself banks and exchanges. The hour of doing justice to the fundamental injustice, war, has come in its turn. Only with it will the others disappear too: the hate of the country for the city, of poverty for gold, of distress for power. The organization of evil has been struck to the heart. [*Hurrahs are heard in the street*] Listen: it is the universal human holiday, wild and shouting.

[CLAIRE *and* HÉRÉNIEN *go towards the window, and meet in a long embrace. All at once* HÉRÉNIEN *disengages himself sharply*]

HÉRÉNIEN. Dress the child; I came to look for him, so that he might see my work.

CLAIRE. The child? But he will not understand.

HÉRÉNIEN. Dress him all the same; I shall say to him, in the presence of a world's death, words that he will never forget. Dress him, that I may take him with me.

CLAIRE. And I?

HÉRÉNIEN. Your brother Haineau will come for you.

CLAIRE. Why can't we all go together?

HÉRÉNIEN. Dress the child, I tell you, and be quick.

[CLAIRE *goes out.* HÉRÉNIEN *looks over his desk, puts some papers in his pocket, then leans from the window, and harangues the* PEOPLE]

HÉRÉNIEN. O bitter, shining, and rebellious life
That I have lived and suffered, how it seems
A rest and light and glory to me now!
I feel myself the greater by this conquered world,
Drawn from the depths to light, by these mere human hands.
Doubtless it was decreed, a farmer of the plains
Should first be born to give me being, me,
That hugely, with these fingers and these hands of mine,
And with these teeth of mine, should grip the throat of the law,
And bring to ground the ancient pride of bloody powers!
The countryside, from farm to farm, from hut to hut,
Died. In the cities where I came
The universal will
Had fallen on such a depth
Of moral carnage: theft, and lechery, and gold,
Howled at each other and crushed each other, thronged
In monstrous hordes of mutual murderous violences.

All the old instincts killed each other, in the narrow lists
Of the pot house or the counting-house.
The formidable and accomplice government
Drew for its nourishment and for its bane
The sap of life from those most filthy dunghills,
And swelled with rotten fulness and content.
I was the lightning shining at the window
Where certain stood to watch the portents of the sky;
And, less by any skill or any plans of mine
Than by some unknown wild supremacy of love
For the whole wide world, I know not from my very self,
I burst the bolts that held
The brotherhood of man
In prison-walls.
The old Oppidomagne I have cast under me —
Charters, abuses, favors, dogmas, memories —
And see her now arise, the future city of man,
Forged by the thunderbolt, and wholly mine,
Who gaze and see the fire of my immortal thought
And my unconquered folly and ardour realized
Shine and become the light in the fixed eyes of fate!

[*Shots are heard*]

CLAIRE [*from her room*]. Hérénien, the Regent's soldiers are coming into the street.

HÉRÉNIEN [*not hearing, continues*]. I have made the world again in my own image,
I have lifted up the people and their fruitful powers
Out of the night of instinct to the vast
And clear and radiant threshold of my pride.

CLAIRE [*re-entering*]. Hérénien! Hérénien! Armed men are watching the house. They will kill you, if you go out.

HÉRÉNIEN. Come, come! Dress the child. [*Renewed firing*]

CLAIRE. The shots are coming nearer to the square.

HÉRÉNIEN. Dress the child.

CLAIRE. They are spying on you; they are waiting for you; they want to take your life . . .

HÉRÉNIEN. Dress the child.

[*She goes to fetch the* CHILD *who trembles, takes it in her arms, and protects it*]

CLAIRE. My friend, I beg of you, do not venture out; wait till they have passed.

HÉRÉNIEN. I have no time to wait. To-day I have no fear, either of others or of myself. I have risen to that point of human strength.

CLAIRE. Go then by yourself, and leave me the child.

HÉRÉNIEN [*with violence*]. I want the child. I want him there, by my side.

CLAIRE. He shall come soon. Haineau will bring him to you.

HÉRÉNIEN. He must be cheered with his father. Give him to me, come, give him to me.

CLAIRE. I have never resisted you. I obey you always, like a slave, but to-day, I entreat you . . .

HÉRÉNIEN. Give him to me, I tell you.

[*He tears the* CHILD *from the arms of* CLAIRE, *thrusts her back, and rushes out with him*]

CLAIRE. My friend! my friend! Oh! that madness! Always his poor, colossal madness! [*An immediate sound of firing arrests her. After a moment of frantic anguish, she runs to the window, and leans out, crying*] My son! my son! [*Then she rushes into the street. Noise of horses galloping away. Tumult. Clamours. A silence. Then, dominating all the others*]

A VOICE. Jacques Hérénien is assassinated!

SCENE II. — *Morning. The Place of the People, laid out entirely in terraces. In the background is seen the panorama of Oppidomagne, veiled in the smoke of conflagration. To the right, the statue of the Regency, in full view, on a platform. To the left, the Palace of War is burning. Townspeople deck the windows with flags; drunken men pass. Wild dances cross the scene; bands succeed bands. Songs are heard on all sides. Boys throw stones at the statue of the Regency.*

A BEGGAR. Now then, ragamuffins, look out, you'll have your ears pulled.

THE BOYS. — We are throwing stones at the Regency, because it's dead. — [*Throwing a stone*] Here goes for the sceptre.

— Here goes for the crown.

BANDS [*surrounding the statue and singing catches*].

And count by four and count by three:
The men of mettle, who are they?
They who reject the soldier's pay,
To wrest their rights wherever wrongs may be,
And win their way to liberty.

And count by three and count by two:
The men of mettle, who are they?
They are the men whose hearts are gay
When cities of gold and fire and fever brew
The cup of the wrath of God for you.

And count by two and count by one:
The men of mettle, who are they?
They who with one hand's hammer bray
To dust the dusty hopes and powers that shun
The light of their chief, the light of the sun.

A PEASANT. Hang me if I ever thought to see Oppidomagne again!

GROUP OF BEGGARS. — I hid myself in a hole, like a beast.

— I took turns in serving both parties. The Oppidomagne people called me the mole: I let them into all the projects of the enemy; and the enemy thought me as subtle as smoke: I kept them posted in the goings on at Oppidomagne.

— We did the same. I worked north.

— And I, west.

— By betraying the both of them, we have ended by settling their differences [*ironically*]. We have made peace.

A GIPSY. Isn't there always a moment when what is called crime becomes virtue?

A BEGGAR. Is it true Hérénien is dead?

THE GIPSY. He! he is master and king now. People don't die when they are so great as that.

A BEGGAR. They killed him at his very door.

THE GIPSY. Who did?

A BEGGAR. The Consulars.

THE GIPSY. Impossible!

A BEGGAR. They might well wish him ill! Never man accomplished so great a work.

THE GIPSY. It is not a man, it is all of us who have done it.

THE SHEPHERD. At last we shall be able to find a living!

THE GIPSY. We! Come now! the soil of humanity would have to be quite differently turned up if the light is to come into our holes and corners. Peace or war,
Still we remain unchanging misery,
Nothing avails to us the idle come and go
Of sorrow or of joy.
Though with new laws Oppidomagne
Should this day set its bitted, bridled people free,
We only shall remain, God only knows till when,
The birds of prey, the wandering birds,
That, little piece by piece, tear up the greedy earth,
Like crows that rich men frighten from their homes,
Chasing them from their thresholds and their orchard-plots,
Although they give free welcome there
To the whole race of birds as free.

THE SHEPHERD. You speak as if the Regency still lived. The country will be reborn. The cities are purging themselves.

THE GIPSY. Fortunately! everything is only a going towards something, and to-morrow will always be dissatisfied with to-day. [*A troop of drunken women crosses the scene, with torches. They shout: "To the churches! to the churches! Burn down God!" To the beggar*]

Look at those, there are your allies! When you and your friends have decided to be really men, come and look for me, as others went and found Hérénien. [*He goes away*]

GROUP OF WORKMEN. [*Putting up a platform on which to lay the corpse of* HÉRÉNIEN. *They bring the black cloth*]

— This is a bad business if there ever was one.

— He had two shots there, in the forehead.

— Was his son killed?

— No.

— Nobody knows which of the guards were the assassins. They got away. Perhaps we shall never know the name of the abominable coward who killed our tribune.

— There was fighting, outside the Regency. It took an hour to dislodge the Consulars. Hérénien was already dead.

A BEGGAR. They say Haineau killed him.

A WORKMAN. Haineau? You don't know what you are talking about! Haineau! why he is more distressed about it than we are.

A Beggar. He was his enemy.

The Workman. Be silent; you lie by all the teeth in your jaws.

The Beggar. I say what I was told.

The Workman. It is people like you who start all the foul stories.

[*Enemies and soldiers of Oppidomagne pass along arm in arm; and crowd on the terrace and steps*]

The Crowd. — Will the holiday come off?

— Why not? It is the new leaders of Oppidomagne who ordered it.

— Never did Hérénien seem so great as in his death.

Group of Passers. — They carry him through the whole city in triumph.

— I saw him crossing the Marble Square. There was a red wound across his face.

— And I, I saw him pass the Haven Bridge;
Mothers with lifted arms
Held out their little ones to him,
So that all young and joyous things
That life can offer to a man
Hovered and bent above this man in death.

— He passes, garlanded with dedicated flowers;
The scarlet shroud enfolds him in a light of flames;
His body:
A very storm of love, like waves of the sea,
Billows him high and holds him over all men's heads;
Never did king, shining with gold,
With blood, with murder, and with battles,
Have at his death
So glorious and so kingly great a funeral.

— At the Colonnades, a young man made his way up to the litter. He dipped his handkerchief in the blood on the cheeks, and long and fervently, as if he received the host, he put it to his lips.

A Workman [*who has heard them talking*]. Jacques Hérénien will be laid out here, on this platform, here, in our midst, in all his glory.

A Peasant. It is good for the sun to see him.

Group of Passers. — Tears, flowers, songs, blood, dances, fire: all conflicting ardours burn in the air!

— It is the right atmosphere when new worlds are created.

[*An immense influx;* Le Breux, *followed by soldiers and workmen, goes upon the step before a house and makes sign that he wishes to speak. Silence*]

Le Breux. Citizens, in a few moments, you will see in this square of Oppidomagne, dedicated to the people, the body of Jacques Hérénien. Receive him as a conqueror. A few shots have been enough to close his eyes, stiffen his arms, immobilize his face, but not to kill him. Jacques Hérénien lives still, in his words, in his acts, in his thought, in his books; he is the force which now exalts us; he wills, thinks, hopes, acts in us. This is not his burial, it is his last victory. Stand back: he comes.

[*Children climb up on people's shoulders. Enormous anxiety in all groups. People get on the windows, climb columns*]

Different Groups on the Terraces. — What a crowd! The square will never hold them!

— How they loved him! People like that ought never to die.

Group of Women. — His wife follows the bier.

— It is she who is carrying the child.

— She is a Christian!

— A Roman!

— Silence: here is the body.

[*The bier comes forward, and is borne round the square; some weep, others cheer, others fall on their knees, some women make the sign of the cross. On the terraces, clusters of people squeeze together to see better*]

Young Men [*marching before the body. With prayer and exaltation*].
— Hérénien, Hérénien, you were our only master!
— There is not any spark of all my thought
You fanned not with your ardour, like a mighty wind.

— Hérénien, Hérénien, 'tis you survive in us!
We vow and dedicate to you
All that our souls one day
Shall fashion us of beauty and of strength and light
And purity in life!

— Hérénien, Hérénien, your memory
Shall be the pulse and heart-beat of the times to come!

— Hérénien, Hérénien, enliven us
That we be always thus, these mad and vehement ones,
That, in ill times,
Now past, your impulse hurried
Out of our weak and wandering ways
Into the whirlwind of your might!

[*The corpse is set down on the platform; women cover the black cloth with flowers*]

THE SEER [*Standing on one of the terraces above the* CROWD].
What hour is near?
Sounds, not of tears, I hear.
This is indeed the hour
When, fatal to the gods, thunder has rolled
To cast them down, haggard and old,
Since sudden truth shines out, in vindicating power!

The hope of man is now again made flesh;
The old desire, replenished with new flowers, new youth,
Springs from the earth; now eyes have light and hearts have truth,
And these magnetic rays bind soul to soul afresh.

And now with shining palms veil over and hide deep
This mortuary crape that covers one asleep;
And now beware lest you profane
The worship and the fame
Of so pure, powerful, and divine a name,
Or this dead man has died in vain.

He was in harmony with the new birth
That waits the world, and with the stars, and time;
He has won life through mortal tumult, mortal crime;
He has crushed under him one of the plagues of earth!

[HORDAIN *rises in agitation. The* CROWD *point to him and cheer. People tell one another who he is*]

THE CROWD. — It was he who refused to attack Oppidomagne.
— He won over the enemy.
— He is as great as Hérénien.

HORDAIN [*pointing to the corpse*]. I was his disciple, and his unknown friend. His books were my Bible. It is men like this who give birth to men like me, humble, faithful, long obscure, but whom fortune permits, in one overwhelming hour, to realize the supreme dream of their master. If fatherlands are fair, sweet to the heart, dear to the memory, armed nations on the frontiers are tragic and deadly; and the whole world is yet bristling with nations. It is in their teeth that we give them this example of our concord. [*Cheers*] They will understand some day the immortal thing accomplished here, in this illustrious Oppidomagne, whence the loftiest ideas of humanity have taken flight, one after another, through all the ages. For the first time since the beginning of power, since brains have reckoned time, two races, one renouncing its victory, the other its humbled pride, are made one in an embrace. The whole earth must needs have quivered, all the blood, all the sap of the earth must have flowed to the heart of things. Concord and good-will have conquered hate. [*Cheers*] Human strife, in its form of bloodshed, has been gainsaid. A new beacon shines on the horizon of future storms. Its steady rays shall dazzle all eyes, haunt all brains, magnetize all desires. Needs must we, after all these trials and sorrows, come at last into port, to whose entrance it points the way, and where it gilds the tranquil masts and vessels. [*Enthusiasm of all: the* PEOPLE *shout and embrace. The former enemies rise and surround* HORDAIN. *Those of Oppidomagne stretch their arms towards him. He disengages himself from them and lays palms at the feet of* HÉRÉNIEN. *Then turning towards the* WIDOW]

In the name of life and the triumph of life, I demand of you, Claire Hérénien, to present to these two exultant people, him who seems to us to be Jacques Hérénien himself: his son! [*He holds out his arms to present the* CHILD]

CLAIRE [*staying him*]. I want to have strength to do it myself. [*She rises*]

Here, in the city's very heart,
Here, at this moment great with hope,
Upon this threshold of new days, that bring
A new beginning to the world;
Drying my tears, and calling on my will,
I dare confide to you this child, child of his flesh,
I dare devote this child to proud, to tragic duty,
To that chimaera, dazzling and divine,
His father bridled and broke in and rode.
I offer him to the future, jubilant in this place
Of feast and insurrection aureoled,

Here in this place of joy and sorrow, even here
Before you all, before the feet of this slain man
Who was Hérénien, and is dead!

[CLAIRE *holds up the* CHILD *in her arms for some time in the midst of cheers and waving of arms, then passes him to* HORDAIN, *and, unable to control herself any longer, falls sobbing on the corpse. Silence comes slowly*]

LE BREUX. This hour is too great and too beautiful, it binds us too intimately to each other, for us to think of oaths or terms of peace. In full liberty, in face of all that remains, inviolate and sacred, in face of this man of genius, whose murdered body and immortal soul enfever and inspire us, we give ourselves, each to each, for ever!

[*Cheers*]

HORDAIN. Yesterday, when with open hands and hearts we entered the city, I was amazed that he who more than all of us had realized our work should be present, in life, at his triumph. So great a conquest required so great a victim. If you consider under what strange circumstances Hérénien, without escort, without arms, offered himself to perhaps the last shot that was fired, you will believe, as I do, that his death is bound up in the mystery of the great and sovereign powers.

HAINEAU. He broke under him the old power whose image still stands upright. [*He points to the statue; there are cries: "Pull it down! Pull it down!"* WORKMEN *seize crowbars to pull it down, and mount the pedestal*] He conquered its spawn, its dastard consuls, its bastard laws, its shameful customs, its paid armies.

THE CROWD. Pull it down! Pull it down!

HAINEAU. He purged its thieving banks, its treasury, its parliaments and its councils: he slew all antagonisms. That image mocks his action. [*He points to the statue*]

THE CROWD. — Oh! the old brute!
— Luckless doll!
— Horrible drab!

ON ALL SIDES. Pull it down! Pull it down!

THE CROWD. — Throw it into the sewers!
— Break it! Smash it to pieces!
— Pull it down! Pull it down!

SOMEONE FROM THE FIELDS. It was that that devoured us!

SOMEONE FROM THE CITIES. It was that that blighted us!

SOMEONE FROM THE FIELDS. It was death!

SOMEONE FROM THE CITIES. It was crime!

ON ALL SIDES. Pull it down! Pull it down!

A WORKMAN [*from the pedestal, to those around*]. Look out: it is going to fall, it is going to fall!

[*In the midst of outcries of hate the huge statue totters and falls. There is immediate silence. Then* HAINEAU *seizes the head, which remains intact, and, staggering under its colossal weight, flings it and breaks it, without a word, at the feet of* HÉRÉNIEN]

THE SEER. Now let the Dawn arise!

THE END

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The bibliographies that follow apply to each author represented in this volume; they are not exhaustive, but touch chiefly on the dramatic activity in question. There is no uniform attempt to record either a list of plays or works of a fictional character. So many of the authors selected are also well-known novelists and essayists, or have made such a distinct reputation as poets, that it was thought best to adhere strictly to the subject of the theater, touching on other matters only where it was necessary. As a preparatory for a survey of the Continental Drama, the reader is advised to consult the following general works. These, added to the references given in their appropriate places, will afford materials wherewith properly to estimate those dramatists whom we have designated as "revolutionary" and "transitional."

GENERAL WORKS

Dukes, Ashley. "Modern Dramatists." C. H. Sergel and Co., Chicago, 1912.

Goldberg, Isaac. "The Drama in Transition." Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati, 1923.

Jameson, Storm. "Modern Drama in Europe." Harcourt, Brace, and Co., New York, 1920.

Jeliffe, Smith Ely, and Louise Brink. "Psychoanalysis and the Drama." 1922.

Lewisohn, Ludwig. "The Drama and the Stage." B. W. Huebsch, New York, 1922.

Mordell, Albert. "The Erotic Motive in Literature." Boni and Liveright, New York, 1919.

Nathan, George Jean. "The Critic and the Drama." Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1922.

Spingarn, J. E. "Creative Criticism." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1917.

HENRIK IBSEN

Archer, William. Ibsen's Dramatic Works. Definitive edition. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1913–1914. See also the *Everyman Library*.

Bienenstock, M. "Zur Theorie des modernen Dramas." Teil 1. Leipzig, 1913.

Boettcher, Friederike. "La femme dans le théâtre d'Ibsen." 1912.

Burchardt, Carl J. B. "Norwegian Life and Literature." Bibliography, 197–221. London, 1920.

Davies, Trevor H. "Spiritual Voices in Modern Literature." George H. Doran Company, New York, 1919. (Ibsen's "Peer Gynt.")

Dowden, Edward. "Henrik Ibsen." (In his "Essays, Modern and Elizabethan," 26–60. London, 1910.)

Eller, William Henri. "Ibsen in Germany: 1870–1900." Richard G. Badger, Boston, 1918.

Firkins, I. T. E. "Henrik Ibsen: A Bibliography of Criticism and Biography." H. W. Wilson Co., White Plains, 1921.

Franc, Miriam Alice. "Ibsen in England." [Dissertation.] Performances, 168–185. Four Seas Co., Boston, 1919.

Gosse, Edmund. "Henrik Ibsen." Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1911. London edition, 1907.

Hans, Wilhelm. "Ibsens selbstporträt in seinen Dramen." Munich, 1911.

Harden, Maximilian. "Ibsen." [In his "Köpfe", Vol. 1, 263–300. Berlin, 1910.]

Heller, Otto. "Henrik Ibsen: Plays and Problems." Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1912.

Henderson, Archibald. "European Dramatists." Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati, 1913.

Huneker, James G. "Ivory Apes and Peacocks", pp. 311–318. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1915.

"Egoists." Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1909.

Ibsen, Henrik. "Lyrics and Poems from Ibsen." Introduction by P. H. Wicksteed. Dent, London, 1912.

Kjaempehöien, dramatisk Digtning i 1 Akt. *Scandinavian Studies and Notes*, Vol. 4, 309–337. 1917.

Speeches and New Letters. Translated by Arne Kildal, with an Introduction by Lee M. Hollander. Bibliographical Appendix. Richard G. Badger, Boston, 1910.

Lavrin, Yanko. "Ibsen and His Creation. A Psycho-critical Study." London, 1921.

Logeman, Henri. "A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Norwegian text of 'Peer Gynt'." The Hague, 1917.

Merezhkovski, Dmitri Sergeyevich. "The Life-work of Henrik Ibsen." From the Russian by G. A. Mounsey. London, 1915.

Moses, Montrose J. "Henrik Ibsen: The Man and His Plays." [Full Bibliographies.] Little, Brown, and Co., Boston.

Roberts, Richard Ellis. "Henrik Ibsen: A Critical Study." London, 1912.

Rose, Henry. "Henrik Ibsen: Poet, Mystic, and Moralist." London, 1913.

Suarès, André. "Trois hommes: Pascal, Ibsen, Dostoïevski." 1919.

Wergeland, Agnes M. "Leaders in Norway." 1916.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Allen, B. Sprague. "Recurrent Elements in Ibsen's Art." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 17, 217–226. Urbana, 1918.

Allen, G. M. "Problem of Individualism in Relation to Society in Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and Hauptmann." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 32, 262–266. June, 1921.

Anderson, Andrew R. "Ibsen and the Classic World." *Classical Journal*, Vol. 11, 216–225. Chicago, January, 1916.

Archer, William. "Fathers and Sons: Ibsen, Björnson and the War." *Fortnightly Review*, n. s. 99, 461–471. 1916.

"From Ibsen's Workshop. The Genesis of his Dramas." *Forum*, Vol. 42, 506–522. 1909.

Birkenbihl, Michael. "Ibsen." *Nord und Süd*, Vol. 43, 73–81. 1919.

Bishop, W. S. "Ibsen's Peer Gynt — A Philosophy of Life." *Sewanee Review*, Vol. 17, 475–487. October, 1909.

Björkman, Edwin. "The Ibsen Myth." *Forum*, Vol. 45, 565–583. 1911.

Brandes, Georges. "Henrik Ibsen intime." *Mercure de France*. Vol. 105, 5–35. 1913.

"Personal Reminiscences." *Century*, Vol. 93, 539–546. February, 1917.

"Henrik Ibsen." *Illustreret Udgave*. Copenhagen, 1916.

"Ibsen und Nietzsche." *Die Zukunst*, Vol. 55, 490–491. 1906.

Colline, Gustave. "Ist Henrik Ibsen ein Dichter?" *Nord und Süd*, Juhrg. 38, Bd. 149, 50–55. 1914.

Croce, Benedetto. "Ibsen." *London Mercury*, Vol. 6, 374–382. 1922. Translated by Douglas Ainslie.

Farquhar, E. F. "Recruiting Ibsen for the Allies." *Drama*, No. 8, 317–328. August, 1918.

Forsyth, P. T. "Ibsen's Treatment of Guilt." *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. 14, 105–122. 1915.

Gosse, E. W. "Visit to the Friends of Ibsen." *Modern Language Review*, Vol. 13, 282–291. July, 1918.

Grummann, Paul H. "Ibsen in His Maturity." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 28, 432–444; 609–620; 730–741; Vol. 29, 229–240. 1917–1918.

Hamilton, Clayton. "Ibsen Once Again." *Bookman*, Vol. 47, 426–431. June, 1918.

Heimann, Moritz. "Ibsen — immer wieder." *Neue Rundschau*, Vol. 28, 119–124. 1917.

Heller, Otto. "Study Course." *Drama League Monthly*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 353–364. April, 1917.

Hellman, A. "Greater Courage in Ibsen's Hedda." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 22, 134–136. March, 1911.

Ibsen's Balloon Letter. *English Review*, Vol. 18, 501–512. November, 1914. Translated by A. R. Anderson.

"Kjaempehöien in its relation to Ibsen's Romantic Works." By Albert Morey Sturtevant. *Journal of English & Germanic Philology*, Vol. 12, 407–424.

La Chesnais, P. G. "Henrik Ibsen et le mouvement ouvrier norvégien: 1849–1851." *Grande Revue*, Vol. 83, 217–254. 1914.

Lie, E. "Ibsen in Transformation." *Living Age*, Vol. 309, 451–453. May 21, 1921.

Logeman, H. "Another Three Notes on Peer Gynt." *Society for Advancement of Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 1, 214–220; also Vol. 1, 27–37. Urbana, 1914.

MacCarthy, D. "Dramatist of the Future." *New Statesman*, Vol. 9, 182–184. May 26, 1917.

Mencken, H. L. "Ibsen: Journeyman Dramatist." *Dial*, Vol. 63, 323–326. October 11, 1917.

"New Letters of Ibsen." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 19, 420–438. November, 1908.

Olson, Julius E. "Phases of Ibsen's Authorship." *Society for Advancement of Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 7, 65–80. 1922.

Poizat, Alfred. "Ibsen." *Correspondant*, Vol. 289 (n. s. 253), 694–709. 1922.

Rose, Henry. "Ibsen as a Religious Teacher." *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 93, 692–708. 1908.

Ruud, M. B. "The Story of the Publication of Ibsen's Brand." *Scandinavian Studies and Notes*, Vol. 5, 91–95. 1918.

Shaw, Charles Gray. "Ibsen's Indignation." *Methodist Review*, Series 5, No. 33 (v. 99), 517–528. 1917.

Sontum, Bolette. "Personal Recollections of Ibsen." *Bookman*, Vol. 37, 247–256. 1913.

Stewart, H. L. "Ibsen and some Current Superstitions." *North American Review*, Vol. 213, 237–246. February, 1921.

Sturtevant, Albert Morey. "Some Phases of Ibsen's Symbolism." *Society for Advancement of Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 2, 25–49. 1914.

"Olaf Liljekrans and Ibsen's Literary Development." *Society for Advancement of Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 5, 110–132. 1918.

Wannamaker, W. H. "Ibsen for American Readers." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 7, 189–194. April, 1908.

Woollcott, A. "Mrs. Fiske on Ibsen." *Century*, Vol. 93, 529–538. February, 1917. (Contained in a book on Mrs. Fiske's views, published by the Century Company.)

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

Clark, Barrett H. "The Continental Drama of To-day." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1914. (Now Stewart Kidd.)
Dukes, Ashley. "Modern Dramatists." C. H. Sergel and Co., Chicago, 1912.
Henderson, Archibald. "The Changing Drama." Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati.
Huneker, James. "Ivory Apes and Peacocks." Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.
Pollard, Percival. "Masks and Minstrels of New Germany." John W. Luce and Co., Boston, 1911. See chapter, "Vienna's Essence: Schnitzler", pp. 265–283.
Reik, Theodor. "Arthur Schnitzler als Psycholog." 1913.
Samuel, H. B. "Modernities." E. P. Dutton and Co., New York, 1914.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Ende, Amelia von. "The Work of Arthur Schnitzler." *Theatre*, Vol. 16, xi. July, 1912.
Grummann, P. H. "Schnitzler." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 23, 25–41.
Henderson, Archibald. Schnitzler bibliography. *Bulletin of Bibliography*, Vol. 7, 155–156. October, 1913. See also "Modern Drama and Opera, a Reading List." Boston Book Co., 1915.
"Arthur Schnitzler." *North American Review*, Vol. 196, 635–645. November, 1912.
Jenney, Florence G. "Schnitzler." *Colonnada*, September, 1914.
Johnson, Fanny. "Arthur Schnitzler." *New Quarterly Review*, Vol. 2, 585–597. London, 1909.
Morgan, B. Q. "Arthur Schnitzler." *Drama*, No. 7, 3–13. August, 1912.
Tibal, André. "Arthur Schnitzler." *Revue de Paris, année* 16, No. 3, 813–830. Paris, 1909.

GERHART HAUPTMANN

Bab, Julius. Gerhart Hauptmann. "*Sozialistische monatshefte*", Bd. 2, 1090–1103. 1911.
Bartels, A. "Gerhart Hauptmann." Weimar, 1897.
Bulthaupt, H. "Ibsen, Wildenbruch, Sudermann, Hauptmann." In "Dramaturgie des Schauspiele", Bd. 4, 1907.
Bytkowski, Sigmund. "Gerhart Hauptmanns Naturalismus und das Drama." 1908.
Clark, Barrett H. "Continental Drama of To-day." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1914. (Now published by Stewart Kidd Co.)
Coar, John Firman. "Studies in German Literature in the Nineteenth Century", pp. 303–357. The Macmillan Co., New York, 1903.
Dukes, Ashley. "Modern Dramatists", pp. 78–95. C. H. Sergel and Co., Chicago, 1912.
Francke, Kuno. "German Ideals of To-day", pp. 275–293. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1907.
Friedmann, S. "Das deutsche Drama des 19 Jahrhunderts." Leipzig, 1903.
Hale, E. E., Jr. "Dramatists of To-day." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1911.
Hecht, Georg. "Gerhart Hauptmann." Leipzig, 1912.
Heller, Otto. "Studies in Modern German Literature." (Sudermann and Hauptmann.) Ginn & Co., Boston, 1905. See *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 2, 685. November, 1905. Also *Poet Lore*, Vol. 16, 127–128. September, 1905.
Henderson, Archibald. "The Changing Drama." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1914. (Now Stewart Kidd.)
Holl, K. "Gerhart Hauptmann — His Life and His Works." Bibliography, 105–108 A. C. McClurg and Co., Chicago, 1914. London edition, 1913.

Huneker, James G. "Iconoclasts: A Book of Dramatists." Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1905.

"Ivory Apes and Peacocks", pp. 203–210. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

Krause, Carl Albert. "Hauptmann's Treatment of Blank Verse." New York University Thesis. G. E. Stechert and Co., New York, 1910.

Lessing, O. E. "Masters in Modern German Literature." G. E. Stechert and Co., New York, 1912.

Lewisohn, Ludwig. Introduction to each volume of Hauptmann's Dramatic Works. B. W. Huebsch, New York.

Mulliken, Clara. Reading List on Modern Dramatists. See "Modern Drama and Opera." Boston Book Co., 1907. Also *Bulletin of Bibliography*, Vol. 5, 32–37, 49–53; 69. 1907.

Muret, Maurice. "Les contemporains étrangers." 191–.

"La littérature allemande d'aujourd'hui." Paris, 1909.

Nordau, Max. "Degeneration", pp. 523–530; 547. D. Appleton and Co., New York, 1895.

Röhr, J. "Gerhart Hauptmanns dramatisches Schaffen." Dresden, 1912.

Schaub, Heinrich Maria. "Gerhart Hauptmann; versuch einer charakteristik." 1914.

Schlenther, Paul. "Gerhart Hauptmann: Leben und Werke." 1912.

Scholz, Karl W. H. "The Art of Translation, with special Reference to English Renditions of the Prose Dramas of Gerhart Hauptmann and Hermann Sudermann." 1918.

Spiero, H. "Gerhart Hauptmann." Bielefeld, 1913.

Steiger, E. "Das Werden des neuen Dramas." Berlin, 1898.

Stern, A. Sudermann and Hauptmann. In "Studien zur Litteratur des Gegenwart", pp. 305–338.

Sternberg, Kurt. "Gerhart Hauptmann; der Entwicklungsgang seiner Dichtung." 1910. See also his "Gerhart Hauptmann." Berlin, 1910.

Stoeckius, Alfred. "Naturalism in the recent German Drama, with special reference to Hauptmann." Columbia University Thesis, New York, 1903.

Trumbauer, Walter H. R. "Gerhart Hauptmann and John Galsworthy: a parallel." Bibliography, 79–81. University of Pennsylvania Thesis, Philadelphia, 1917.

Witkowski, Georg. "German Drama of the 19th Century", pp. 187–202. Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1909.

Wœrner, V. C. "Gerhart Hauptmann." Berlin, 1901.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Allen, Genevieve M. "The Problem of Individualism in relation to Society in Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and Hauptmann." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 32, 262–266. Summer, 1921.

Barker, Thomas Stockham. "Gerhart Hauptmann and His Work." *Critic*, Vol. 34, 225–231. March, 1899.

Becker, May Lamberton. "Gerhart Hauptmann — Realist and Idealist." *Independent*, Vol. 73, 1235–1238. November 28, 1912.

Beckman, J. H. "Hauptmann and Shakespeare." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 23, 56–63. January, 1912.

Buck, P. M., Jr. "Hauptmann and Tragedy." *Nation*, Vol. 102, 589–591. June 1, 1916.

Clarke, H. A. "Pippa Passes and Pippa Dances." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 20, 122–128. March, 1909.

Coar, J. Firman. "Three Contemporary Dramatists." *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 81, 71–80. January, 1898.

Düsel, F. "Gerhart Hauptmann." *Westermanns Monatshefte*, Bd. 133, 249–257. 1922.
Eloesser, A. "Gerhart Hauptmann (70th Birthday)." *Nation*, Vol. 115, 520–521.
Fechter, Paul. "Gerhart Hauptmann." *Deutsche Rundschau*, Vol. 193, 152–157. 1922.
Foster, F. M. "Work of Gerhart Hauptmann." *Colonnade*, Vol. 7, 156–162. February, 1914.
Friedrich, Arthur. "Die schlesische Leinen-industrie und Gerhart Hauptmann." *Deutsche Revue*, Jahrg. 41, Bd. 4, 229–232. 1916.
"Germany's Rebirth." *Living Age*, Vol. 312, 17–22. January 7, 1922.
Glascock, C. C. "Environment and Hero in Gerhart Hauptmann's Plays." *Archiv. f. d. Studium der neueren Sprachen u. Lit.*, Vol. 123 (n. s. 23), 225–240. 1909.
Grummann, Paul H. "Gerhart Hauptmann's Dramas from 'The Sunken Bell' to 'Pippa'." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 21, 285–299. July–August, 1910. Also Vol. 22, 117–127. March, 1911.
"Hauptmann's Emanuel Quint." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 27, 430–438. 1916.
"Hauptmann's Festspiel." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 26, 68–71. January, 1915.
"Hauptmann's point of view in 'Und Pippa Tanzt'." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 20, 129–134. March, 1909.
"Hauptmann's Treatment of Germanic Myths." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 18, 89–96. March, 1909.
"Recent German Criticism comprising Bulthaupt's interpretation of Hauptmann." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 16, 117–126. 1905.
Guthrie, William Norman. "Gerhart Hauptmann." *Sewanee Review*, Vol. 3, 278–289. May, 1895.
Haenisch, Konrad. "Gerhart Hauptmann as a Man." *Living Age*, Vol. 314, 783–787. 1922.
"Hauptmann in Vienna." *Living Age*, Vol. 312, 61.
"Hauptmann's Dramas." *Living Age*, Vol. 303, 21–24. October 4, 1919. See also *Living Age*, Vol. 238, 711–726 and *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 191, 317–336, 1900; *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 198, 156–177. 1903.
Hellmann, A. "Hauptmann and the Nietzschean Philosophy." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 24, 341–347. September, 1913.
Henderson, Archibald. "Gerhart Hauptmann: Social Idealist." *Arena*, Vol. 33, 251–257. March, 1905.
Heuser, F. W. J. "Personal and Literary Relations of Hauptmann and Wedekind." *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 66, 395–402. November, 1921.
Lee, Elizabeth. "German Drama of To-day." *Living Age*, Vol. 234, 156–166.
Lewisohn, E. "Dramatic Works of Hauptmann." *Yale Review*, n. s. 4, 420–422. January, 1915.
Litzmann, Grete. "Gerhart Hauptmanns Festspiel in deutschen Reimen." *Literarhistorische Gesellschaft*, Vol. 8, 65–106. Bonn, 1913.
Mann, Thomas. "Von deutscher Republik. Gerhart Hauptmann zum sechzigsten Geburtstag." *Neue Rundschau*, Vol. 33, 1072–1106. 1922.
Marshall, Beatrice. "Gerhart Hauptmann." *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 76 (n. s. 70), 459–481. September, 1901.
Meyer, Edward Stockton. "Modern German Drama." *Critic*, Vol. 47, 61–70. July, 1905.
Monod, Gaston. "Gerhart Hauptmann, démocrate et pacifiste." *La Revue*, Sér. 6, 103, 251–258. 1913.
Müller, Margarethe. "Gerhart Hauptmann." *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 86, 368–377. September, 1900.
"Nature Background in the Dramas of Hauptmann." *German American Annals*, Vol. 17, 22–66; 92–111. Philadelphia, 1919.

Randall, A. W. G. "Gerhart Hauptmann." *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 122, 636–644. November, 1922.

Rudwin, M. J. "Review of Lewisohn's edition of the Hauptmann plays." *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 32, 369–372. June, 1917.

Schuetze, Martin. "Hauptmann's 'Dieversunkene Glocke'." *Americana Germanica*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 60–95. 1899.

Schrieber, C. F. "Work of Gerhart Hauptmann." *Colonnade*, Vol. 8, 153–162. November, 1914.

Shaw, Charles Gray. "The Æsthetic Frightfulness of Gerhart Hauptmann." *Methodist Review*, Vol. 98, 860–871. 1916.

Sickert, Robert. "Gerhart Hauptmann." *New Quarterly Review*, Vol. 2, 395–420. 1909.

Smith, Garnett. "Contemporary German Drama." *Quarterly Review*, 1914.

Steiner, Edward A. "Two German Dramatists." *Outlook*, Vol. 67, 74–77. January 5, 1901.

Stephenson, N. W. "Hauptmann's Fuhrmann Henschel." *Drama*, No. 1, 169–175. February, 1911.

"Sunken Bell, The." Translation by Meltzer. R. H. Russell, New York, 1902. William Heinemann, London; Doubleday Page and Co., Garden City, 1908. See also K. Francke's "Glimpses of Modern German Culture", pp. 85–97, 1898; also Francke's "German Classics", Vol. 18, 105–210; *Dial*, Vol. 28, 430, June 1, 1900.

Thompson, Nesta. "Naturalism and the Dream Motive as Observed in the Dramas of Gerhart Hauptmann." *Washington University Studies*, Vol. 8, 77–101. 1920.

Trarieux, Gabriel. "Gerhart Hauptmann." *Revue d'art dramatique*, n. s. 9, 97–105. 1900.

Weber, Rolf. "Das religiöse problem bei Gerhart Hauptmann." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 15, 390–405. 1916.

Wiehr, Josef. "The Naturalistic Plays of Gerhart Hauptmann." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 6, 1–71; 531–575. 1906.

HERMANN SUDERMANN

Axelrod, Ida. "Hermann Sudermann: eine Studie." 1907.

Bulthaupt, Heinrich. "Ibsen, Wildenbruch, Sudermann, Hauptmann." In his "Dramaturgie des Schauspiels", Bd. 4.

Chandler, F. W. "Aspects of Modern Drama." The Macmillan Co., New York, 1914.

Clark, Barrett H. "Continental Drama of To-day." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1914.

Coar, J. F. "Studies in German Literature in the 19th Century", pp. 315–335. 1903.

Dukes, Ashley. "Modern Dramatists." C. H. Sergel and Co., Chicago, 1912.

Hale, E. E., Jr. "Dramatists of To-day." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1911.

Heller, Otto. "Studies in Modern German Literature." Ginn and Co., Boston, 1905.

Kawerau, Waldemar. "Sudermann: eine kritische studie." 1897.

Lewisohn, Ludwig. "The Modern Drama." B. W. Huebsch, New York, 1915.

Litzmann, B. "Das deutsche drama." Hamburg, 1894.

Moses, Montrose J. "Representative One-Act Plays by Continental Authors." Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1922.

Mulliken, Clara. Reading List on Modern Dramatists. See "Modern Drama and Opera." Boston Book Co., 1907.

Phelps, William Lyon. "Essays on Modern Novelists." The Macmillan Co., New York, 1910.

Scholz, K. W. H. "The Art of Translation, with special Reference to the English Rendi-

tions of the Prose Dramas of Hauptmann and Sudermann." University of Pennsylvania, 1918.
Stern, A. "Sudermann and Hauptmann." See "Studien zur Litteratur der Gegenwart", pp. 305–338.
Sudermann, Hermann. "The Book of My Youth." Harper and Brothers, New York, 1923.
Witkowski, G. "The German Drama of the Nineteenth Century." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1909.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Besson, P. "Les romans et nouvelles de H. Sudermann." *Annales de l'Univers de Grenoble*, Vol. 13, 459–494. 1901.
Coar, J. F. "Three Contemporary German Dramatists." *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 81, 71–80. January, 1898.
Ende, Amelia von. "Sudermann." *Theatre*, Vol. 16, 5–8, xi. July, 1912.
Grummann, Paul H. "Sudermann." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 22, 195–211. 1911.
Jones, Dora M. "Plays of Hermann Sudermann." *Westminster Review*, Vol. 154, 553–560. 1900.
Lee, Elizabeth. "German Drama of To-day." *Living Age*, Vol. 234, 156–166.
Lilly, W. S. "The Joy of Living." *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 78, 429–440. September, 1902.
Low, F. B. "Sudermann Cycle." *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 60, 651–667.
Meyer, Edward S. "Modern German Drama." *Critic*, Vol. 47, 61–70. July, 1905.
Meyer, Richard M. "Sudermann." *International Monthly*, Vol. 6, 140–154. 1902.
Miller, F. "Sudermann and His Weltanschauung." *Bookman*, Vol. 23, 645–648. August, 1906.
Muret, Maurice. "Le destin de l'Allemagne d'après M. Sudermann." *Revue de Paris, année* 30, 1, 191–203. 1923.
Schaffer, Aaron. "Sudermann and the War." *Sewanee Review*, Vol. 27, 343–349. 1919.
Wells, Benjamin W. "Sudermann." *Forum*, Vol. 26, 374–384. 1898.

ANTON TCHEKHOFF

Anichkova, Anna M. "La pensée russe contemporaine." Paris, 1903.
Bakshy, Alexander. "The Path of the Modern Russian Stage." John W. Luce and Co., Boston, 1918.
Baring, Maurice. "Landmarks in Russian Literature", pp. 263–299. London, 1910. See also his "The Puppet Show of Memory." Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1922.
Bechhofer, C. E. (Translator) "Five Russian Plays." E. P. Dutton and Co., New York, 1916.
Brückner, A. "A Literary History of Russia." Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1908.
Calderon, George. "Two Plays by Tchekhof." Mitchell Kennerley, New York, 1912. London edition by Grant Richards.
Clark, Barrett H. "The Continental Drama of To-day." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1914. Now published by Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati.
Dukes, Ashley. "Modern Dramatists", pp. 190–210. C. H. Sergel and Co., Chicago, 1912.
Garnett, E. "Tchekov and His Art." *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 236, 257–269. October, 1921.
Gerhardi, William. "Anton Chehov: A Critical Study." Duffield and Co., New York, 1923.
Gorky, Maxim. "Reminiscences of Anton Tchekhov." By Gorky, Alexander Kuprin, and I. A. Bunin. Translated by S. S. Koteliansky and Leonard Woolf. B. W. Huebsch, New York.

"Letters of Anton Tchekhoff (Chekhov) to His Family and Friends." Translated by Constance Garnett. The Macmillan Co., New York, 1920. This volume is reviewed as follows: *New Republic* (F. Hackett), Vol. 22, 226–227, April 14, 1920; *Dial* (R. M. Lovett), Vol. 68, 626–632, May, 1920; London *Mercury*, Vol. 2, 94–95, May, 1920; London *New World*, Vol. 3, 162–168, July, 1920.

Malleson, Miles. "Young Heaven and Three Other Plays." Allen and Unwin, London, 1918.

Moscow Art Theatre Series of Russian Plays. Edited by O. M. Sayler. Brentano, New York, 1923. Vol. 1 — "Tsar Fyodor Ivanovitch," by Count Alexei Tolstoy; Vol. 2 — "The Lower Depths," by Maxim Gorky; Vol. 3 — "The Cherry Orchard," by Anton Tchekhoff; Vol. 4 — "The Three Sisters," by Anton Tchekhoff. Translated by Jenny Covan.

Murry, J. M. "Aspects of Literature." Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1921.

"Note-book of Anton Tchekhoff." Translated by S. S. Koteliansky and Leonard Woolf. B. W. Huebsch, New York, 1921. See London *Mercury*, Vol. 3, 285–295. 1921.

Perski, Sergyei M. "Contemporary Russian Novelists." Translated by F. Eisemann. John W. Luce and Co., Boston, 1913.

Phelps, William Lyon. "Essays on Russian Novelists", pp. 234–247. The Macmillan Co., New York, 1911.

"Plays of Anton Tchekhoff." Translated by Marian Fell. Vol. 1. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1912.

"Plays of Anton Tchekhoff." Translated by Julius West. Vol. 2. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1916.

Sayler, Oliver M. "The Russian Theatre under the Revolution." (Afterwards issued as "The Russian Theatre." Brentano, New York, 1923) Chapter iv. "The Plays of Tchekhoff at the Art Theatre", pp. 45–63. Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1920.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Baring, Maurice. "The Plays of Anton Tchekhoff." *New Quarterly Review*, Vol. 1, 405–429. London, 1908.

Birkmyre, Robert. "The New Letters of Anton Tchekhoff." *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 111 (n. s. 105), 434–445. March, 1919. Same in *Living Age*, Vol. 301, 86–95. April 12, 1919.

Boyce, N. "Plays." *Harper's Weekly*, Vol. 58, 22–23. December 27, 1913.

Brinton, Christian. "Anton Tchekhoff." *Critic*, Vol. 45, 318–320. 1904.

Bulletin of Bibliography. October, 1912.

Calderon, George. "The Russian Stage." *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 217, 27–29. July, 1912.

Fagin, N. B. "Master of the Gray Short Story." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 32, 416–424. September, 1921.

Forman, Henry James. "Actress Wife's Mirror of Anton Tchekhoff." New York *Times*, January 28, 1923.

Fyfe, H. "Chekoff and Modern Russia." *English Review*, Vol. 24, 408–414. May, 1917.

Gorky, M. "What Tchekhoff Thought of It." *English Review*, Vol. 8, 256–266. May, 1911.

Humble, V. "Anton Tchekhoff." *Finsk tidskrift*, Vol. 82, 132–137. Helsingfors, 1917.

King, Gertrude B. "Criticism of The Three Sisters." *New Republic*, Vol. 6, 256–258. July 8, 1916.

"Les trois sœurs." *Revue blanche*, Vol. 30, 284–310; 326–345. 1903.

Letters of Anton Chekhov to Olga Knipper. New York *Herald*, January 28, 1923.
"Life and Art of Anton Tchekhoff." (W. L. Phelps) *Yale Review*, n. s. 11, 399–406. January, 1922.
Long, R. E. C. "Anton Tchekhoff." *Eclectic Magazine*, n. s. 8, 586–598. 1902. Also *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 78 (n. s. 72), 103–118. 1902.
Lykiardopoulos, M. "Chekhoff's Sea-Gull in London." *New Statesman*, Vol. 13, 238–239. June 7, 1919.
McAfee, H. "Tchekhoff and the Spirit of the East." *North American Review*, Vol. 204, 282–291. August, 1916.
Noyes, G. R. "Anton Tchekhoff." *Nation*, Vol. 107, 406–408. October 12, 1918.
"Recorder of Lost Illusions." *Lippincott Magazine*, Vol. 90, 363–370. September 1, 1912.
Savitch, G. et Jaubert, E. "Anton Tchekhoff." *Revue Politique et Littéraire*, Vol. 56, 143–144. March 2, 1918.
Strannik, Ivan. "Anton Tchekhoff." *Revue de Paris*, Vol. 6, 311–344. 1902.
"Tchekhoff as a Teacher, Anton." (A. L. Fovitsky), New York *Times*, February 4, 1923.
"Tchekhoff and the Moscow Art Theatre." (H. Bernstein), *Literary Digest International*, *Book Review*, January, 1923.
Tchekhoff, Anton: "Is His Art a Distilled Poison?" *Current Opinion*, Vol. 71, 505–507. October, 1921.
"His Art." (E. Garnett) *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 236, 257–269. October, 1921.
"His Peasants." *Nation*, Vol. 107, 589. November 16, 1918.
See also *Spectator*, Vol. 114, 10–11, January 2, 1915; *New Republic* (L. Sulveritsky), Vol. 30, 312–313; *Quarterly Review*, ccxvii, 27; *Bookman*, Vol. 16, 332; *Independent*, Vol. 59, 299.
"Tchekhoff's Note-books." E. B. Osborn. *Living Age*, Vol. 309, 608–609. June 4, 1921.
Van Wijk, N. "Anton Tchekhoff." *Gids*, Vol. 77, 461–498. Amsterdam, 1913.
Woolf, L. S. "Short Stories of Tchekhoff." *New Statesman*, Vol. 9, 446–448. August 11, 1917.

LEONID ANDREYEFF

Baring, Maurice. "Russian Mystery Play: Life of Man." *Living Age*, Vol. 258, 786–792. September 26, 1908.
Bernstein, Hermann. "Satan's Diary." Boni and Liveright, New York. See also his "With Master Minds."
Gov'kii, M. "Andreyev at Capri." *Living Age*, Vol. 314, 525–529. August 26, 1922.
Kaun, A. "End of Andreyeff." *New Republic*, Vol. 31, 133–135. June 28, 1922.
Kayden, E. M. "Life and Work of Andreyeff." *Dial*, Vol. 67, 425–428. November 15, 1919.
Moses, Montrose J. "Representative One-Act Plays by Continental Authors." Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1922. Bibliography.
Young, Stark. Review of "He Who Gets Slapped." *New Republic*, Vol. 29, 283–284. February 1, 1922.

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

Borgese, G. A. "Gabriele D'Annunzio." Naples, 1909.
Bruers, Antonio. "Gabriele D'Annunzio e il moderno spirito italico." 1921.
Clark, Barrett H. "Continental Drama of To-day." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1914. Now published by Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati.
Cosulich, Gilbert. "The Francesca of D'Annunzio." New Orleans, 1909.

Courtney, W. L. "The Development of Maeterlinck and Other Foreign Writers." Grant Richards, London, 1904.

Crawford, Virginia M. "Studies in Foreign Literature", pp. 186–218. London, 1899.

Croce, B. "La Letteratura della nuova Italia." 1915.

Dukes, Ashley. "Modern Dramatists." C. H. Sergel and Co., Chicago, 1912.

Goldberg, Isaac. "The Drama of Transition: Native and Exotic Playcraft." Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati, 1922.

Hérelle, G. Translator. "Francesca da Rimini." *Revue de Paris, année* 17, No. 6, 449–497, 749–770, 1910; *année* 18, 1, 55–79, 1911. Translated into English by Arthur Symons. Frederick A. Stokes Co., New York, 1902. Libretto adapted from Symons by Tito Ricordi.

Herford, Charles H. "Shakespeare's Treatment of Love and Marriage." Essays. London, 1921.

Hermann, Oscar. "Living Dramatists." Introduction by W. W. Massee. Brentano, New York, 1905.

Huneker, James G. "Iconoclasts." Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1905.

"La figlia di Iorio." Translated by G. Hérelle. *Illustration théâtrale*, No. 5, 1905.

MacClintock, Lander. "The Contemporary Drama of Italy." Bibliography. Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1920.

McLeod, Addison. "Plays and Players in Modern Italy." C. H. Sergel and Co., Chicago, 1912.

Mulliken, Clara A. Reading List on Modern Dramatists. (See also *Bulletin of Bibliography*, Vol. 5, 32–37; 49–53; 69. 1907.) Boston Book Co.

Pazini, Giovanni. "Stroncature." (Croce, d'Annunzio, Benelli, etc.) 1919.

Piccoli, Valentino. "Glorie e martirii nella poesia di G. d'Annunzio." 1919.

Ricciardi, Achille. "Il teatro del colore." (Dedicated to d'Annunzio.)

Ruberti, Guido. "Il Teatro Contemporaneo in Europa." 2 vols. 1920–1921.

Sharp, William. "Studies and Appreciations." 1912. See also *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 74 (n. s. 68), 391–409. September, 1900.

Symons, Arthur. "Studies in Prose and Verse", pp. 129–142. E. P. Dutton and Co., New York, 1904.

Warren, Whitney. "Fiume and d'Annunzio." 1919.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Altrocchi, R. "Latest Dramatic Exploit." *Drama*, No. 11, 268–269. May, 1921.

Anderson, M. B. "D'Annunzio as a National Poet." *Dial*, Vol. 52, 270–271. April 1, 1912.

Archer, William. "The Dead City." Produced by the London Stage Society. *Nation*, Vol. 104, 414. April 4, 1918.

Baron, Jean. "La 'Francesca da Rimini' et les 'Odes' receules de M. D'Annunzio." *Minerva, année* 1, 3, 374–397.

Borgese, Giuseppe Antonio. "L'opera poetica di Gabriele d'Annunzio." *Nuova antologia*, Ser. 4, Vol. 107 (191), 106–128. 1903.

Boulenger, Marcel. "Une Visite au Commandant d'Annunzio." *Revue des deux mondes, période* 6, No. 48, 801–816. 1918.

"Gabriele d'Annunzio dans Fiume." *Revue de Paris, année* 27, No. 5, 545–562; 816–836. 1920.

Brainard, Gertrude G. "The Paolo and Francesca Theme in Modern Drama." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 27, 390–405. July–August, 1916.

Campos, J. J. "Gabriele d'Annunzio, Poet and Patriot." *East and West*, Vol. 15, 865–875. 1916.

Casseres, B. "De Idealism of d'Annunzio." *International*, Vol. 8, 129–130. April, 1914.

Clyne, Anthony. "Two Italians: Da Vinci and d'Annunzio." *Quarterly Review*, series 5, Vol. 19, 162–174. London, 1920.

Collins, J. "Gabriele d'Annunzio." *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. 68, 304–311. September, 1920.

Collison-Morley, Lacy. "D'Annunzio's Lyric Poetry." *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 233, 136–145. 1921.

Cooper, F. T. "Gabriele d'Annunzio." *Bookman*, Vol. 3, 18–23. March, 1896.

Corprechot, Lucien. "Gabriele d'Annunzio and the War." *France*, Vol. 2, 1–15. 1919.

Courtney, W. L. "D'Annunzio as a Dramatist." *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 107, 145–158. January, 1920.

Crane, F. "Imagery of d'Annunzio." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 26, 488–498. July-August, 1915.

"D'Annunzio in Fiume." *Current History Magazine*, Vol. 11, pt. 1, 238–243, November, 1919; Vol. 11, pt. 2, 11–13, January, 1920; Vol. 13, pt. 2, 219–223, February, 1921. See also Vol. 11, pt. 1, 401–403, December, 1919.

"D'Annunzio, Poet Rebel." *Literary Digest*, Vol. 63, 42–54. October 4, 1919.

"D'Annunzio, Position of." *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 119, 107–109. January, 1921. *Century*, Vol. 99, 356–358. January, 1920.

"Daughter of Jorio." Translated by Porter, Isola, Henry. *Poet Lore*, Vol. 18, 1–88. 1907. See *Outlook*, Vol. 88, 142, January 18, 1908; *Poet Lore*, Vol. 19, 111–119. 1908.

De la Ramée, Louise. "Gabriele d'Annunzio." In "Critical Studies", pp. 1–49. 1900. Also *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 67, 349–373. March, 1897.

Destrée, Jules. "Figures italiennes d'aujourd'hui." Gabriele d'Annunzio. *Revue de Paris, année* 24, 5, 138–164. 1917.

Dornis, Jean. "La vigile du poète Gabriele d'Annunzio et la guerre." *Revue des deux mondes, période* 6, 34, 875–887. 1916. See also consideration of d'Annunzio as a romancer, *Revue des deux mondes, période* 38, 838–861. 1907.

Ferrara, O. "With d'Annunzio at Fiume." *Current History Magazine*, Vol. 12, 318–322. May, 1920.

Fornaro, Carlode. "Gabriele d'Annunzio the Man." *Critic*, Vol. 45, 137–141. August, 1904.

Fornaro, Sofia de. "Italian Writers of To-day." *Critic*, Vol. 41, 103–105. August, 1902.

"Francesca da Rimini." Walkley, "Drama and Life", pp. 255–259; *Arena* (Henderson), Vol. 39, 144–148, February, 1908; (Symons) *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 77, 237–246. February, 1902; *Athenæum*, Vol. 1, 475, April 11, 1903; (Sedgwick) *Dial*, Vol. 34, 9, January 1, 1903; (Edith Wharton) *North American Review*, Vol. 175, 17–30, July, 1902; (Isola) *Poet Lore*, Vol. 19, 111–119, 1908; *Saturday Review*, Vol. 96, 114, July 25, 1903.

Furst, H. "D'Annunzio and the City of Dreams." *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 89, 241–252, February, 1921.

Geiger, André. "La jeunesse de d'Annunzio." *La revue hebdomadaire, année* 26, 12, 333–353; 469–508; 605–642. 1917.

Hauvette, Henri. "Gabriele d'Annunzio, poète national." *Revue pédagogique*, n. s. 67, 7–18. 1915.

"Italian Poets of To-day." *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 196, 246–268. 1902.

James, Henry. "The Novels of Gabriele D'Annunzio." *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 199, 383–419. 1904. See also James' "Notes on the Novelists", pp. 245–293.

Janni, Ettore. "Gli uomini dell' Italia odierna. Gabriele d'Annunzio." *Rivista d'Italia, anno* 21, 2, 215–225. 1918.

Jones, T. F. "Work of d'Annunzio." *Colonnade*, Vol. 7, 118–124. January, 1914.

Marinette, F. T. "Le théâtre de Gabriele d'Annunzio." *La revue d'Art dramatique*, Vol. 10, 420–426. 1901.

Menasci, Guido. "Gabriele d'Annunzio." *English Illustrated Magazine*, Vol. 24, 515–521. 1901.

Metcalf, John Calvin. "An Old Romantic Triangle." *Sewanee Review*, Vol. 29, 45–58. 1921.

Miller, R. F. "D'Annunzio and the coming Italy." *Living Age*, Vol. 314, 441–445. August 19, 1922.

Nollen, John S. "D'Annunzio." *Grinnell Review*, Vol. 16, 369–373. 1921.

Piot, Stéphane. "Gabriele d'Annunzio et la politique nationale en Italie." *Revue de sciences politique*, sér. 3, 34, 115–144. August 15, 1915.

Rè, Arundel del. "The Poetry of Gabriele d'Annunzio." *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 78, 892–906. 1915.

Rival, Paul. "Un dictateur lyrique, Gabriele d'Annunzio." *Revue hebdomadaire, année* 29, 9, 196–211. 1920.

"Un acteur tragique, Gabriele d'Annunzio." *Mercure de France*, Vol. 145, 577–598. 1921.

Roeder, Ralph. "D'Annunzio and Dr. MacClintock." *Theatre Arts Magazine*, Vol. 4, 115–121. April, 1920.

Ruggiero, G. de. "D'Annunzio as a Poet of the War." *Living Age*, Vol. 303, 595–598. December 6, 1919.

Sampson, G. "Criticism of D'Annunzio." *Bookman* (London), Vol. 49, 77–78. December, 1915.

Seton-Watson, R. "True Motive of d'Annunzio's Conspiracy." *Living Age*, Vol. 303, 512–517. November 29, 1919.

Sharp, William. "The Dramas of Gabriele D'Annunzio." *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 74 (n.s. 68), 391–409. 1900.

Slaughter, G. "D'Annunzio and the New World." *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 125, 127–132. January, 1920.

Slossom, E. E. "Twentieth Century Troubadour." *Independent*, Vol. 100, 12. October 4, 1919.

Squire, J. C. "The Spectacle of d'Annunzio." London *Mercury*, Vol. 3, 187–193. 1920.

Stapleton, J. "Personality of d'Annunzio." *Living Age*, ser. 8, 16, 327–330. November 8, 1919.

Symons, Arthur. "Francesca da Rimini." *Fortnightly Review* (n. s. 71), Vol. 77, 237–246. 1902.

Vaunois, Jacques. "Les discours et messages de Gabriele d'Annunzio à Fiume." *Grande Revue*, Vol. 104, 384–401. 1921. See also *Living Age*, Vol. 308, 626–634. March 12, 1921.

Wharton, Edith. "Three Francescas." *North American Review*, Vol. 175, 17–30. July, 1902.

Williams, Orlo. "The Novels of D'Annunzio." *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 218, 334–354. October, 1913.

GUISEPPE GIACOSA (1847–1906)

Clark, Barrett H. "The Continental Drama of To-day." Henry Holt and Co., New York 1914.

Dornis, Jean. "Le théâtre italien d'aujourd'hui."

MacClintock, L. "Contemporary Drama of Italy." Bibliography. Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1920.

McLeod, Addison. "Plays and Players of Modern Italy." C. H. Sergel and Co., Chicago, 1912.

Moses, Montrose J. "Representative One-Act Plays by Continental Authors." Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1922.

Ruberti, Guido. "Il Teatro contemporaneo in Europa." 1921.

JOSÉ ECHEGARAY (1835–1916)

Clark, Barrett H. "The Continental Drama of To-day." Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1914.

"Masterpieces of Modern Spanish Drama." Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati, 1922 (re-issue of a former edition). "Echegaray: The Great Galeote," translated by Eleanor Benteceu. "Benito Pérez-Galdós: The Duchess of San Quentin," translated by Philip M. Hayden. "Angel Guimerá: Daniela," translated from the Catalan by John Garrett Underhill. Excellent bibliographies and lists.

Ford, J. D. M. "Main Currents of Spanish Literature." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1919.

Goldberg, Isaac. "José Echegaray." Thesis. Harvard University. 1912.

"The Drama of Transition: Native and Exotic Playcraft." Spain, 61–121; "Echegaray", 61; "Benavente", 96. Bibliography in footnotes. Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati, 1922.

Jameson, Storm. "Modern Drama in Europe." Harcourt, Brace, and Co., New York, 1920.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Brainerd, G. G. "Paolo and Francesca theme in modern drama." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 27, 300–405.

Curzon, Henri de. "Le théâtre d'Echegaray." *Étude analytique. Nouvelle Revue*, Series 3, No. 25, 180–196; 351–366; 487–509; No. 26, 85–100; 256–270; 387–403. Book was published, Paris, 1912.

"Death of Echegaray" (1835–1916). *Dramatic Mirror* (New York), Vol. 76, 16. September 23, 1916. *Nation*, Vol. 103, 286. September 21, 1916.

"Echegaray, Engineer, Statesman and Dramatist." *Review of Reviews*, Vol. 56, 96–97. July, 1917.

"Echegaray, the Great Spanish Dramatist." *Outlook*, Vol. 114, 166–167. September 27, 1916.

"Honoring Spain's Grand Old Dramatist." *Literary Digest*, Vol. 53, 682. September 16, 1916.

JACINTO BENAVENTE

Benavente y Martinez, J. "El teatro del pueblo." Madrid, 1909.

"Les dramaturges espanoles contemperances." Valencia, 1917.

Underhill, John Garrett. "The Plays of Benavente." 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1917, *et seq.*

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Alarcon, M. "Benavente as an Interpreter of Women." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 29, 201–205. March–April, 1918.

Brouta, J. "The Spanish Stage." *Drama*, 1914.

Nobel Prize Award. *Current Opinion*, Vol. 69, 825. December, 1920.
Onis, Federico de. "Benavente." *North American Review*, pp. 357–364. March, 1923.
Parker, H. T. *Boston Transcript*, May 19, 1920. Goldberg notes a performance of Benavente's "The Governor's Wife", by the Harvard Dramatic Club, May 18, 1920.
Underhill, J. G. "Benavente as a Modern." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 29, 194–200. March–April, 1918.
"Genius of a Spanish Dramatist." *New York Times Book Review*, January 28, 1923.
Underhill, J. G., and M. Alarcon. "Benavente." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 29, 201–205. March–April, 1918. See above.

EDMOND ROSTAND

Altrock, Hermann. "Parallelismus, Antithese und romantische Ironie in Rostands Cyrano." Berlin, 1912.
Arnold, Wilhelm. "Edmond Rostand's Princesse Lointaine und Samaritaine." Kiel, 1901.
Benoist, A. "Le théâtre d'aujourd'hui." Series 2.
Chandler, Frank W. "The Contemporary Drama of France." Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1920.
"Chantecler." *Le Théâtre*, Numéro spécial. No. 268. February, 1910. See also *Everybody's*, Vol. 24, 742–764; Vol. 25, 30–46, 191–208, 350–363. See also M. J. Ernest, Charles, Le théâtre des poètes, 422–424. See *L'Illustration, année* 68, 125–154, 167–182, 199–214, 229–242. February 12, 19, 26, March 5, 1910.
Chesterton, G. K. "Five Types: A Book of Essays." Varied Types, pp. 78–82. Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1911.
Clark, Barrett H. "The Continental Drama of To-day." (Formerly published by Henry Holt and Co.; now by Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati.)
"Contemporary French Dramatists." Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati, 1915. See also the *Theatre Arts Magazine*, Vol. 3, 22–24. 1919.
De Kermen, Valérie Louise. (Chantrelle.) "The Real Meaning of Chantecler." 1911.
Ewart, Frank C. "Notes on Rostand's L'Aiglon." With an Introduction. 1904.
Filon, A. "De Dumas à Rostand." 1898.
Gregory, Eliot. "How Cyrano Came to be Written." An Interview with M. Coquelin. Reprint from the *New York Times*. Doubleday Page and Co., Garden City.
Hale, E. E., Jr. "Dramatists of To-day." Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1911.
Hann, Florence Yates. "The Story of Chanticleer." F. A. Stokes Co., New York, 1913.
Harasti, Jules. "Edmond Rostand." Bibliography, 41. Paris, 1913. See also *Revue de Hongrie*, Vol. 9, 283–298, 372–387, 442–452; Vol. 10, 39–62, 108–125, 198–212, 293–312. 1912.
Haugmard, L. "Edmond Rostand: biographie-critique." *Les celébrités d'aujourd'hui*. E. Sansot & C^ie^, Paris. 1910.
Hovingh, M., and J. Bitter. "Autour de Cyrano." Thesis. Zwolle, 1914.
Lewisohn, Ludwig. "The Modern Drama." B. W. Huebsch, New York, 1915.
Mulliken, Clara A. Reading List on Modern Dramatists. Bibliography. See also *Bulletin of Bibliography*, Vol. 5, 32–37, 49–53, 69.
Suberville, Jean. "Le théâtre d'Edmond Rostand. Étude critique." Paris, 1919.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Aldrich, T. B. "Notes on L'Aiglon." Ponkapog Papers, pp. 73–78; *Century*, Vol. 42, 277
Allou, Maurice. "L'idealism di Edmond Rostand." *Nuova antologia*, Vol. 199, 377–382. 1919.

Andrews, C. "Works of Edmond Rostand." *Colonnade*, Vol. 9, 178–193. June, 1915.
Aubry, G. Jean. "Edmond Rostand" (April 1, 1868–December 2, 1918). *Fortnightly Review*, n. s. 105, 122–132. 1919. Also n. s. 111, 622–632. January, 1919.
Beerbohm, Max. "Cyrano on the London Stage." *Saturday Review*, Vol. 89, 524.
"Fantasticks." *Saturday Review*, Vol. 89, 680.
"L'Aiglon." *Saturday Review*, Vol. 91, 767.
Brulat, Paul. "Souvenirs d'enfance sur Edmond Rostand." *Revue mondiale*, Series 7, No. 134, 290–295. 1920.
Buck, Philo M. "Edmond Rostand, the Tergiversist." *Methodist Review*, Vol. 96, 255–266. 1914.
Burr, A. R. "Writings of Rostand." *North American Review*, Vol. 212, 110–117. July, 1920.
"Case against Rostand." *Bookman*, Vol. 32, 217–218.
"Chantecler and The Birds of Aristophanes." *Living Age*, Vol. 264, 696–699.
Conacher, W. M. "Rostand." *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. 28, 66–77. Kingston, 1920.
"Cyrano de Bergerac." (Jules Lemaître) *Revue des deux-mondes*, February 1, 1898; (G. McDermot) *Catholic World*, Vol. 69, 181; (L. Strachey) *Lippincott*, Vol. 63, 264; (C. H. Genung) *Book Buyer*, Vol. 17, 201; (E. E. Hale, Jr.) *Dial*, Vol. 25, 340; (G. Kobbé) *Forum*, Vol. 26, 502; (C. de Kay) *Critic*, Vol. 33, 152; (M. Beerbohm) *Saturday Review*, Vol. 86, 42.
Dippell, Victor W. "Edmond Rostand." *Reformed Church Review*, Vol. 20, 500–522. Lancaster, 1916.
Doumic, René. "Edmond Rostand." *Revue des deux mondes, période* 6, 54, 641–652. 1919.
"Chantecler." *Revue des deux mondes*. February 15, 1910.
Edmonds, Mary A. "Appreciation of Edmond Rostand." *Forum*, Vol. 51, 592–604, April, 1914.
Faguet, Émile. "L'Aiglon." *Journal des Débats*, March 19, 1900. See also article by Gustave Larroumet, *Le Temps*, October 21, 1901.
Fay, Charles E. "Cyrano de Bergerac." *Tuftonian*, May 1, 1899.
Filon, A. "Rostand." *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 70, 98.
Foronda, Manuel de. "El Cyrano de Bergerac en el teatro espanol." *Revista contemporanea*, pp. 384–400. 1899.
Frank, G. "Politics and the Cock of Dawn." *Century*, Vol. 103, 637–644. February, 1922.
Galdemar, A. "Edmond Rostand and Chantecler." *McClure's Magazine*, Vol. 35, 523–537.
Grandgent, Charles Hall. "Chantecler." (In Anniversary Papers, pp. 67–72), Boston, 1913.
Hale, E. E. Jr. "L'Aiglon." *Dial*, Vol. 29, 354.
Hamilton, Clayton. "Mary Magdalene and La Samaritaine." *Bookman*, Vol. 32, 602–604.
"Supernatural Plays. Chantecler." *Bookman*, Vol. 33, 25–27. March, 1911.
"Edmond Rostand. Appreciation." *Bookman*, Vol. 48, 676–679. February, 1919.
Hart, J. A. "Rostand's Chicago Rival." *Bellman*, Vol. 26, 378–380. April 5, 1919.
Henderson, Archibald. "Theatre of Edmond Rostand." *Arena*, Vol. 34, 224–234.
Howe, S. "Stage Setting in Chantecler." *International Studio*, Vol. 47, sup., 49–54.
Howells, W. D. "New Poetic Drama." *North American Review*, Vol. 172, 794–797. May, 1901.
James, Henry. "Edmond Rostand." *Cornhill Magazine*, n. s. 11, 577–598. 1901. Also *Critic*, Vol. 39, 437–450. 1901.
Kiessmann, Rudolf. "Rostand-Studien." *Romanische-Forschungen*, Vol. 25, 198–286. 1908.

Lancaster, H. C. "Les erreurs de documentation de Cyrano de Bergerac." *Modern Notes*, Vol. 30, 210–211. November, 1915.

Lasserre, Pierre. "Edmond Rostand." *Minerve française*, Vol. 1, 25–50. 1919.

Lecigne, C. "Edmond Rostand." *Revue de Lille, année* 21, 177–201. 1910.

Lewisohn, Ludwig. "Edmond Rostand." *Nation*, Vol. 107, 769–770. December 21, 1918.

Macdonald, J. F. "Paris, Rostand and Chantecler." *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 93, 575–590.

Marquand, E. "Rostand's Chantecler." *New England Magazine*, n. s. 42, 226–231.

Marsh, E. C. "Barnyard chef-d'œuvre." *Bookman*, Vol. 32, 154–156. October, 1910.

Moffatt, Cleveland. "Author of Cyrano de Bergerac." *McClure's Magazine*, Vol. 14, 437–445.

Nordau, Max. "Chantecler." *Bookman*, Vol. 31, 397–401.

Official Reception to the Académie Française. *Nation*, Vol. 76, 510. June 25, 1903. *Lamp*, Vol. 26, 494–495. July, 1903.

Pascal, Félicien. "Edmond Rostand." *Monde moderne*, Vol. 17, 657–667. 1903.

Phelps, William Lyon. "Work of Edmond Rostand." *Yale Review*, Vol. 10, 576–594. April, 1921. See also his "Essays on Modern Dramatists." Macmillan Co., 1921.

Piggott, F. T. "Chantecler." *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 88, 79–90. July, 1920. The Season of French Plays.

Poizat, Alfred. "Edmond Rostand." *Correspondant*, Vol. 273 (n. s. 237), 789–797. 1918. See also *Living Age*, Series 8, Vol. 13, 300–305. February 1, 1919.

Praviel, Armand. "M. Rostand et la préface de Cromwell." *Revue des Pyrénées*, Vol. 22, 564–592. Toulouse, 1910.

Rosenfeld, Paul. "Rostand's Plays." *New Republic*, Vol. 17, 337–339. 1919.

"Rostand's Home and Garden in the Basque Country." *Touchstone*, Vol. 7, 333–338. August, 1920.

"Rostand and the Literary Prospects of the Drama." *Living Age*, Vol. 228, 1–11. See also *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 192, 307.

"Rostand. Appreciation." *North American Review*, Vol. 212, 110–117. July, 1918. See also *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. 28, 66–77. July–September, 1920.

Ruhl, Arthur. "Miss Adams as Chantecler." *Collier*, Vol. 46, 19. February 4, 1911.

Sargent, Irene. "Chantecler." *Colonnade*, Vol. 9, 205–215. June, 1915.

Sedgwick, E. "Rostand." *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 82, 826–833. 1898.

Slosson, E. E. "Bird of France." *Independent*, Vol. 68, 680–685.

Soissons, S. C. de. "Chantecler." *Living Age*, Vol. 265, 37–43. See *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 115, 188–195. 1919.

Spiers, A. G. H. "Rostand as Idealist." *Columbia University Quarterly*, Vol. 20, 155–169. 1918.

Strachey, Lionel. "Cyrano and S. E. Gross's Merchant Prince of Cornville." *Bookman*, Vol. 15, 436. July, 1902.

Thomas, Eleanor W. "The Romanticism of Edmond Rostand." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 32, 64–75. Spring, 1921.

Townsend, E. W. (Chimmie Fadden.) "L'Aiglon and Women." *Century*, Vol. 41, 914.

Van Vorst, B. "Madame Bernhardt in L'Aiglon." *Critic*, Vol. 36, 429–440.

Vimbert, P. S. "Coquelin's French Version" (Cyrano). *National Magazine* (Boston), Vol. 9, 471.

Wilstach, Paul. "Mansfield in Cyrano." *Scribner's*, Vol. 44, 533–541. November, 1908. "Some Footnotes on Cyrano." *Bookman*, Vol. 10, 363.

Young, S. "Rostand." *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 44, 102.

HENRY BECQUE

Becque, Henry. "Souvenirs d'un auteur dramatique." Paris, 1895.
Théâtre complet. 2 vols. Paris, 1890. Containing "Sardanapole", "L'enfant prodigue", "Michel Pauper", "La Navette", "Les honnêtes femmes", "Les Corbeaux", "La Parisienne."
Clark, Barrett H. "The Continental Drama of To-day", pp. 129–135. Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1914. (Now published by Stewart, Kidd Co., Cincinnati.)
Doumic, René. "Essais sur le théâtre contemporain." 1905.
Du Bois, F. "Henry Becque, l'homme, le critique, l'auteur dramatique." 1888.
Dukes, Ashley. "Modern Dramatists." C. H. Sergel and Co., Chicago, 1912.
Faguet, E. "Propos de théâtre." 1903.
Filon, Augustin. "Modern French Drama." London, 1898.
Geffroy, G. "Les Corbeaux." Revue encyclopédique (1897), p. 1038.
Got, Ambroise. "Henry Becque: Sa vie et son œuvre." Bibliography, pp. 162–165. Paris, 1920.
Huneker, James. "Iconoclasts", pp. 163–181. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1905.
Lemaître, Jules. "Impressions de théâtre." 3 series, La Parisienne, Vol. 219; 10 series, "Les Corbeaux", 303.
Sarcey, Francisque. "Quarante ans de théâtre." Bibliothèque des Annales. Henry Becque. Vol. 6, 1900–1902.
Tilden, F. Translator. "The Vultures", "The Woman of Paris", "The Merry-Go-Round." Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1913.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

"Becque: nécrologique." *Journal des débats*, May 14, 1899.
"Becque devant la presse." *La Plume*, 1899.
"Becque's Plays." *Nation*, Vol. 98, 644–645. May 28, 1914.
Brisson, A. "Le théâtre de Becque et Les Corbeaux." *Le Temps*, October 30, 1910.
Faguet, E. "Henry Becque." *Journal des débats*, May 15, 1899.
Ganderax, L. "Les Corbeaux." *Revue des deux mondes*, Vol. 411, 694–707. 1882.
Guillemot, Maurice. "Henry Becque." *Grande Revue, année* 8, Vol. 2, 497–508. 1904.
Jordan, Leo. "Henry Becque's Polichinelles." *Germanish-romanische Monatsschrift*, Vol. 5, 48–57. Heidelberg, 1913.
"Jugements sur Les Corbeaux." (Faguet, H. Bauer, Fr. Sarcey, H. Fouquier, J. Lemaître.) *Revue encyclopédique* (1897), p. 1039.
Kahn, Gustave. "Henry Becque." *Revue blanche*, Vol. 19, 180–185. 1899.
Souday, P. "Le théâtre contemporain après Henry Becque." *La Quinzaine*, November 16, 1899.
Tissot, E. "Le théâtre réaliste français et M. Henry Becque." *Revue internationale*, pp. 360–376. 1890.
Van Hall, J. "Les Corbeaux." *De Gids*, Vol. 1, 511–519. 1900.
Woguë, Jules. "Le théâtre de Henry Becque." *Grande Revue*, Vol. 9, 604–632. 1899.

MAURICE DONNAY

Chandler, Frank W. "The Contemporary Drama of France." Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1920.
Clark, Barrett H. "Contemporary French Dramatists." Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati, 1915.

"The Continental Drama of To-day," pp. 145–149. Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1914. (Now published by Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati.)

"Four Plays of the Free Theatre." Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati, 1915.

"Lovers", "The Free Woman", "They." *Modern Drama Series.* Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1915.

"Three Modern Plays from the French." Bibliographies. Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1914.

Donnay, Maurice. *Theatre.* Vols. 1–7. 1908. Vol. 1. "Lysistrata"; "Eux"; "Folle entreprise"; "Education de prince." Vol. 2. "Amants" (Théâtre de la Renaissance, November 5, 1895); "La Douleureuse" (Théâtre du Vaudeville, February 12, 1897); "L'Affranchie" (Théâtre de la Renaissance, February 5, 1898). Vol. 3. "Georgette Lemeunier" (Théâtre du Vaudeville, December 15, 1898); "Le Torrent" (Comédie-Française, May 5, 1899); "La Bascule." Vol. 4. "L'Autre Danger"; "Le Retour de Jerusalem." Vol. 5. "L'Escalade"; "Paraître"; "La Veille" (1-a.); "Bodinière" (March 26, 1895). Vol. 6. "La Patronne"; "Le Ménage de Molière." Vol. 7. "Le Mariage de Télémaque"; "Les Éclaireuses"; "L'Impromptu du Paquetage"; "Le théâtre aux armées."

Doumic, René. "Essais sur le théâtre contemporain." Paris, 1897.

Le Brun, Roger. "Maurice Donnay." Bibliography. Paris, 1903.

Lemaître, Jules. "Impressions de théâtre." Vol. 6. 1892.

"Les contemporains: Études et Portraits littéraires." 7 series. 1899.

"Opinions à répandre." 1901.

Moullè, Edouard. "Six chants populaires." (Test edited by Donnay.) 1910.

"Petite Anthologie des Auteurs gais contemporains." 1918.

Saint-Auban, Émile de. "L'Idée sociale au Théâtre." (Le Sourire de l'Anarchie.)

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Acker, Paul. "Maurice Donnay." *Écho de Paris,* May 16, 1903.

Benoist, Antoine. "Le théâtre de Maurice Donnay." *Revue de Pyrénées,* Vol. 20, 169–199; 321–346. 1908.

Brisson, Adolphe. "Maurice Donnay." *Figaro,* December 15, 1898.

Cartoons of Donnay. *Le Rire,* April 7, 1899; also *Cri de Paris,* May 29, 1900.

Chevassu, Francis. "Maurice Donnay. Les Petits Salons." *Figaro,* March 12, 1903.

Flat, Paul. "Figures de ce temps." *Revue politique et littéraire, année 52, sem.* 1, 359–362. 1914.

Fresnois, André du. "Notes sur le théâtre de Maurice Donnay." *Revue critique,* Vol. 20, 257–273. 1913.

Gâchons, Jacques des. "Maurice Donnay." *Le monde moderne,* February, 1903.

Grappe, Georges. "Maurice Donnay." *Revue hebdomadaire,* December 27, 1902.

Lacour, Léopold. "Maurice Donnay." *Revue de Paris,* Vol. 1, 379–400. January 15, 1903.

Lemaître, Jules. "Figurines." Maurice Donnay. *Echo de Paris,* December 14, 1898 and Maurice Donnay. "Le Mariage de Télémaque." *L'Illustration théâtrale,* No. 152.

Lévy, Paul. "Maurice Donnay." *Revue d'Art dramatique,* January, 1903.

Legé, M. "Work of Maurice Donnay." *Théâtre,* Vol. 20, 32. July, 1914.

McCormick, Virginia T. "Maurice Donnay and his Passing Show." *North American Review,* pp. 671–678. November, 1921.

Mendès, Catulle. "Lysistrata." *L'Art au théâtre,* Vol. 2, 225.

P. L. "Le Métier dramatique." Interview with Donnay. *Revue Bleue,* August 15, 1901.

Pélissier, Georges. "Maurice Donnay. La littérature dialoguée en France." *La Revue*, January 1, 1898.
Rivoire, André. "Maurice Donnay." *Revue d'Art dramatique*, May, 1897.
Saint-Cère, Jacques. "Maurice Donnay." *Revue illustrée*, November 15, 1895.
Spiers, A. G. H. "Work of Maurice Donnay." *Nation*, Vol. 104, 111–113. January 25, 1917.
"Visit from Donnay." *New Republic*, Vol. 30, 242–243.
Wisner, René. "Maurice Donnay." *Grande Revue*, January 1, 1903.
Woguë, Jules. "Le théâtre de Maurice Donnay." *Revue du Mois*, Vol. 10, 435–447. 1910.
X. —— "Maurice Donnay à la campagne." *La vie heureuse*, September, 1903.

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

Bithell, Jethro. "Life and Writings of Maurice Maeterlinck." London, 1913.
Bridges, Horace. "Criticisms of Life." Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1915.
Clark, M. "Maurice Maeterlinck: Poet and Philosopher." London, 1915. See *Dial*, Vol. 61, 391–393. November 16, 1916.
Dickinson, T. H. "Chief Contemporary Dramatists." Series 1. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1915.
Huneker, James G. "Iconoclasts: A Book of Dramatists." Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1905.
Moses, Montrose J. "Maurice Maeterlinck: A Study." Bibliography. Duffield and Co., New York, 1911.
"On Emerson and Other Essays," by Maurice Maeterlinck. Translation. Dodd, Mead, and Co., New York, 1912.
"Representative One-Act Plays by Continental Authors." Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1922.
Picard, Gaston. "Un candidat à l'Académie: Maurice Maeterlinck." *Revue critique des idées et des livres*, Vol. 12, 166–185. 1911.
Rose, Henry. "Maeterlinck's Symbolism." Dodd, Mead, and Co., New York, 1911.
Staples, Lida M. "An Interpretation of Maeterlinck's Blue Bird." 1914.
Taylor, Una. "Maurice Maeterlinck." London, 1914. See *Dial*, Vol. 61, 390–391. *Drama*, No. 21, 133–138. February, 1916.
Thorold, Algar L. "Six Masters in Disillusion." London, 1909.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Allen, Genevieve M. "The Problem of Individualism in Relation to Society in Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and Hauptmann." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 32, 262–266. Summer, 1921.
Declassant, Henry. "Maeterlinck." *New England Magazine*, n. s. 43, 256–263. 1911.
Donati-Petteni, Giuliano. "Il teatro di Maurizio Maeterlinck." *Emporium*, Vol. 46, 189–196. 1917.
Draper, J. W. "Maeterlinck and Yeats." *Colonnade*, Vol. 71, 240–245. April, 1914.
Gourmont, R. de. "Literary Sketch." *Drama*, No. 18, 260, 262–268. May, 1915.
Jastrow, J. "The Case of Maeterlinck." *Review*, Vol. 2, 381–384. April 17, 1920.
Moses, Montrose J. "Early Friends of Maurice Maeterlinck." *Book News Monthly*, Vol. 33, 506–508. June, 1915.
Phelps, William Lyon. "Estimate of Maeterlinck." *North American Review*, Vol. 213, 98–108. January, 1921. In his "Essays on Modern Dramatists."

"Sketch of Maurice Maeterlinck." *Bookman* (New York), Vol. 39, 511–514. July, 1914. *Bookman* (London), Vol. 46, 85–86. May, 1914.

ÉMILE VERHAEREN

Guilbeaux, Henri. "Anthologie des lyriques allemands contemporains depuis Nietzsche." Preface by É. Verhaeren. Paris, 1913.

Lowell, Amy. "Six French Poets." The Macmillan Co., New York, 1915.

Mabille de Poncheville, André. "Verhaeren en Hainaut." Paris, 1920.

Meckel, Albert. "Un poète de l'énergie, Émile Verhaeren: l'œuvre et l'homme." Paris, 1917.

"Poèmes et essais." Bruxells: Assoc. des écrivains belges. Bibliography, pp. 9–11. Anthologie des écrivains belges de langue française, 1917.

Rencey, Georges. (*Pseud.*, M. Stassart.) "Propos de littérature." Paris, 1912.

Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom. Verhaeren Commemoration. March 3, 1917.

Samuel, H. B. "Modernities." E. P. Dutton and Co., New York, 1914.

Verhaeren, Émile. The Plays of: "Dawn", translated by Arthur Symons; "The Cloister", translated by Osman Edwards; "Philip II", translated by F. S. Flint; "Helen of Sparta", translated by Jethro Bithell. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1916. The Edwards translation is in the *New Poetry Series*, London, 1915. For reviews of "The Cloister", see Production at the Kingsway Theatre, London, *London Illustrated News*, Vol. 146, 104, January 30, 1915; *Saturday Review*, Vol. 119, 82–83, January 23, 1915; *Athenæum*, pt. 1, 77–78, January 23, 1915. See also *Nation* (New York), Vol. 102, 262–263, March 2, 1916; *Dial*, Vol. 62, 99, February 8, 1917. Arthur Symons' translation of "The Dawn." Small, Maynard, and Co., Boston, 1915. See *Drama*, No. 20, 715–716. November, 1915.

Zweig, Stefan. "Émile Verhaeren: sa vie, son œuvre." Translated from the German by Jethro Bithell. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1914. In the Zweig bibliography there are recorded the various editions of Verhaeren's poems.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

"Aesthetic Interpretation of Belgium's Past." British Academy for the Promotion of Historical, Philosophical, and Philological Studies. Proceedings, Vol. 8. London, 1917.

Bagshaw, William. "Émile Verhaeren." *Manchester Quarterly*, Vol. 32, 270–281. 1913.

Beaunier, André. "Poètes contemporains." *Revue politique et littéraire.* (*Revue Bleue*), séries 4, Vol. 14; *sem.* 2, 461–465. 1900.

Bertaut, René. "Émile Verhaeren, homme de lettres." *Notice bio-bibliographique. Revue bibliographique belge, année* 13, lxvii–lxxxv. Brusselles, 1901.

Bickley, Francis. "Émile Verhaeren, the poet of Belgium and of Europe." *Living Age*, séries 7, Vol. 65, 630–632. 1914.

Bocquet, Léon. "Émile Verhaeren et l'épopée flamande." *Revue de Hollande, année* 2, pp. 1000–1019. 1917.

Bouglé, Célestin Charles Alfred. "Verhaeren." Conference. Paris, 1919. (Les grandes figures de l'Entente.)

"Verhaeren devant la guerre." *Revue politique et littéraire, année* 57, 132–139. Paris, 1919.

Brandes, Georges. "Émile Verhaeren as a Dramatist." *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 86, 185–189. 1904.

BARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 12504

Date Due

WITHDRAWN

GIFT

Main
PN
6112
.M58

Representative
continental dramas

(822.08 M85r)